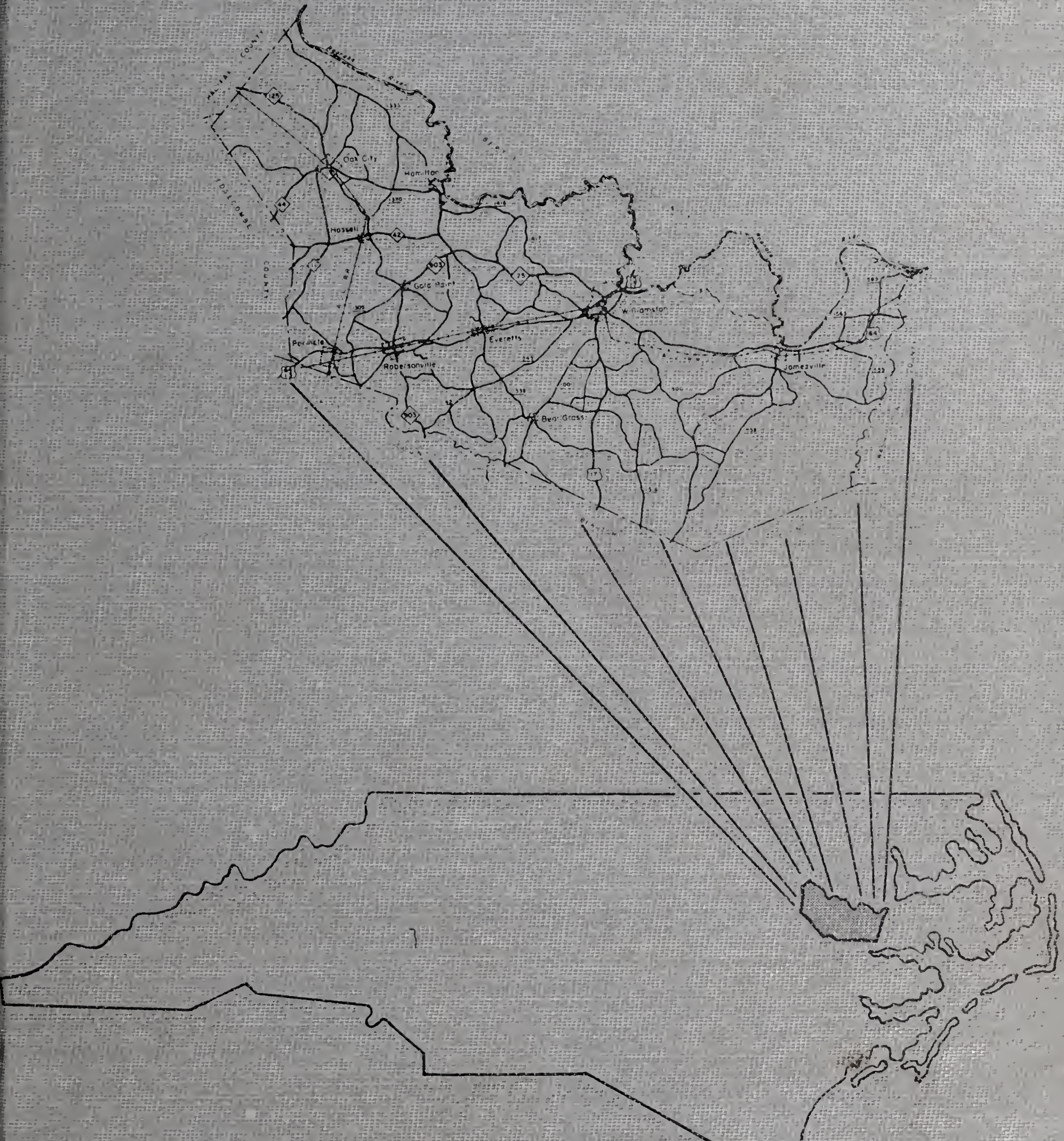
MARTIN COUNTY HISTORY

VOLUME I



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MARTIN
COUNTY
HISTORY

Volume I

INDEXED

BY
FRANCIS M. MANNING
And W. H. BOOKER

WILLIAMSTON, N. C.
ENTERPRISE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1977

INTRODUCTION

In addition to "Religion and Education in Martin County—1774-1974," the publishers now present Volume No. I of "Martin County History", the next volume to follow late in 1977.

Authored by Francis M. Manning and Walter Herman (Jack) Booker, this volume deals principally with the formation of Martin County, the townships and towns therein. A few other subjects, mentioning prominent county people, doctors, hospitals, and authors, are also included in this volume. It is proposed to include subjects relative to agriculture, transportation—river, rail and highway—, corporations, and, of course, the weather in the next volume. Hopefully, a story of county maps by George Stevenson, and a history of Martin County Indians will be available for inclusion in Volume II.

Shortly before Mr. Booker's death on October 30, 1976, plans were made to reorganize the historical facts and prepare them for publication. They had been waiting for special data which were unavoidably delayed. His death created more confusion, leaving the surviving author struggling for solutions to the problems. Rightly or wrongly, the final decisions were made in January of this year, and the facts and data were turned over to the publishers.

Admittedly, the authors recognized their weaknesses as historians and writers. However, they were hopeful that the facts and other historical data would be of use to and result in some amount of interest and pleasure for the people of this county.

Following two years of extensive study, the authors, with the help of researchers at Duke Library, Durham, the North Carolina collection at the University of North Carolina and Archives and History, Raleigh, attempted to combine the data found in those centers with "odds and ends" picked from old newspapers, manuscripts, and other sources plus a bit of information handed down by word of mouth. More than one hundred volumes of newspapers were read by Mary James Skinner and James C. Manning who picked out every little item relating to Martin County and its people. The diary of Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell, consisting of several thousand pages, was read in its entirety, the researchers striving to ferret out every item relating to the county.

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Another obstacle that delayed publication of this volume was the boundary between Martin and Halifax counties. All documents and papers, as far as it can be determined, list Whitmel Hill as a Martin County man. The site of his home was pointed out as being in the town of Palmyra. The county charter says the county was to begin at the mouth of Kehukee Creek on Roanoke River. Kehukee Creek is a mile or more beyond the town of Palmyra.

Ralph W. Donnelly, a noted historian, accepted the task of determining the beginning point on the Roanoke. He examined maps dating as far back as 1770. Although the location of the creek varies to some extent, the boundary line misses Palmyra by a small margin, leaving the town in Halifax County. Hill owned extensive holdings in both Martin and Halifax, and he could have had a home, first in Martin and then in Halifax. If Hill was in Halifax all the while, then it is difficult to understand why the documents and old letters list him as a Martin County man. While there could be some doubt about his residential status, the authors recognize him as being a Martin County man.

It is quite evident that some trivial bits of history are included in the pages that follow, and that some pertinent and important facts are not to be found therein. However, the authors did the best they could in preparing this volume, hoping their efforts would be of value to students and other interested readers over the years.

The authors worked on the histories almost two years, centering their search from the early days down to the end of 1975, with the exceptions of a few entries recorded in 1976.

In dedicating this volume to Sarah Roberson Manning, her son acknowledges with grateful appreciation her interest and efforts in his getting an education, however limited it might be, and the spirit of determination to try and do something that could prove of value, though of some questionable worth, to somebody as time goes along.—FMM.

Dedicated to the Memory of

Sarah Roberson Manning

(Mother of one of the authors)

Enterprise Publishing Company
Williamston, N. C.
April, 1977.

CHAPTER I

THE FORMATION OF MARTIN COUNTY

Prior to its settlement by white men, the North Carolina territory which was to become Martin County was inhabited solely by Indians, who hunted the forests and fished the streams for the bounties provided by nature in great abundance. There were different tribes and languages among these early aborigines, and at first the colonists and Indians in this section generally got along very well together, each respecting the rights of the others.

The steady increase in white population began to cause concern to the Indians, and their suspicions mounted with the growing number of outsiders moving into the region and pushing them out of their chosen hunting grounds. A climax was reached in 1711, when the first major blow against the newcomers was struck by the Tuscaroras, a most numerous and warlike tribe, who were ethnically connected with the Iroquoian Five Nations of the lake country of New York. They conspired with the Pamplico, Cotechny, Core, Maramiskeet, Matchapungo and other tribes to attack settlers along the Neuse, Trent, Pamlico, Tar and Roanoke rivers.

A time was appointed for simultaneous action, and on the day preceding the new moon, September 22, 1711, the work of murder and pillage was to begin. The Tuscaroras, with 1,200 warriors divided into numerous small units, were committed to destruction on the plantations bordering the Roanoke River, thence proceeded south down to the Pamlico. The Pamplicos were charged with the slaughter of the whites who lived near them along the river by the same name. The Cotechneys, who lived in what is now Greene County, were to join the Cores and do the work at New Bern and on the Neuse and Trent rivers. The Maramiskeets and Matchapungos, of the present Hyde and Beaufort counties, were assigned to murder the inhabitants of Bath and neighboring plantations. As to the northern shores of the Albemarle, the Tuscaroras and Meherrins were to take care of that, assisted by the smaller tribes.

Sunrise of the appointed day was the signal for the simultaneous butchery to begin. The slaughter was indiscriminate, and the wonder is that any white person escaped. Gray-haired aged, vigorous manhood, childhood's helplessness—all fared alike. One hundred and fifty were killed in the settlements on the Roanoke, most of them on the northern shore; sixty or more in and around New Bern and practically all those in and around Bath fell under the knife and the tomahawk. The massacre continued for three days without letup, the utmost in cruelty marking the onslaught of the savages. The few colonists who escaped gathered together with their arms, stunned by the blow they had received, at first attempted nothing more than to assemble the surviving women and children and guard them night and day until a more effective course of action could be formulated.

The massacre called for swift retaliation, and the colonists moved to the attack as soon as they could. Governor Hyde called out the militia of North Carolina, but its number was regarded as insufficient, and help was solicited from neighboring states. No help was forthcoming from Virginia, but South Carolina responded by sending Colonel Barnwell with 600 militia and 360 Yemanssee Indians. The eastern North Carolina Indians collected all their strength into one body and retreated as Barnwell advanced, finally constructing a wooden palisade fort on the banks of the Neuse about 18 miles west of New Bern, where a decisive battle was fought on January 28, 1712. Barnwell's forces defeated the Indians with great slaughter. More than 300 were killed and 100 were captured, and the fort was completely destroyed.

A few yeras later, in 1718, the Tuscaroras, now completely disheartened and disorganized, entered into a treaty which gave them a reservation on the north bank of the Roanoke River in Bertie County. In consideration of this they formally relinquished all claims to any other land in the province and settled themselves on the Roanoke just across from present-day Martin County. Remnants of the tribe gradually drifted north to join the other Iroquoian groups and became the Six Nations. They continued to hold title to the land in Bertie County, in the section still known as "Indian Woods," until relatively recent years.

Indian artifacts, including arrowheads, pieces of broken pottery and crude stone axe heads, have been found in a number of places in this section, and it is known that there were several Indian villages on the south bank of the Roanoke River in those early days. However, most of the Indian troubles had been resolved by the time the county was created, and there is very little mention in early records, either public or private, about these people and their part in the early history of what was to become Martin County. About the only reminder of the original inhabitants to be found in the county today are Indian place names applied to a number of streams, localities and churches. Among them are Morattock, Conoho, Kehukee, Skewarkee, Conine, Huskanaw, and the like, with their varied spellings dating back to the very earliest records extant.

Martin County was formed from Tyrrell and Halifax Counties in 1774, in the midst of one of the most turbulent periods of American history. It was less than three years after the Battle of Alamance, near Hillsborough, between the "Regulators" and North Carolina militia called up by Royalist Governor Tryon—generally considered one of the first skirmishes of the American Revolution—and only a few months before the first meeting of the North Carolina Provincial Congress independent of royal authority in August, 1774.

Attempts to establish a new county for the territory which eventually became Martin had been launched more than four years previously. Residents of the area had been experiencing some difficulty and considerable expense in attending to their affairs at the seats of government for the two counties in which they were then living. William Slade, a representative from the section in the Colonial House of Commons, made several efforts to have the new county created from upper Tyrrell and lower Halifax and co-sponsored a number of bills to that effect during 1769, 1770 and 1771. He succeeded in getting the bills passed by the lower chamber several times, but they evidently failed to secure approval of the governor or council, as none of them ever became law while he was in the General Assembly.

First reference to a new county is found on page 116, Volume VIII, Colonial Records, where it is recorded that "Mr. William Slade presented the petition of sundry inhabitants of Tyrrell County, praying the upper part of Tyrrell and lower end of Halifax counties may be it was somewhere around 1663. It was composed of three precincts, Carteret, Berkeley, and Shaftesbury, named in honor of three of the Lords Proprietors. Shaftesbury (later to be known as Chowan Precinct) embraced the territory which included the present bounds of Martin County.
council.

About a week later, on November 6, 1769, it was recorded that "A bill was sent to the council by Mr. (William or Ebenezer) Slade and Mr. (Peter) Wynn for erecting the upper part of Tyrrell and lower part of Halifax counties into one separate and distinct county and parish by the name of Bedford County and Saint John Parish." Thus it would seem it was first proposed to give the names of Bedford County and St. John Parish to what eventually became Martin County and the Parish of St. Martin. However, there is no record of any further action on this bill, so it evidently was disapproved by the council or the royal governor.

On December 14, 1770, it is recorded, "Received by the council from the assembly from Mr. (William) Slade and Mr. Alston, a bill for erecting a part of the counties of Halifax and Tyrrell into a county and parish." This is the only mention of that bill in the Colonial Records. Next, on January 2, 1771, page 348, Vol. VIII, Colonial Records, there appears an entry showing that William Slade and Edmondson S. Smithwick of Tyrrell County "presented a bill for erecting part of the counties of Halifax and Tyrrell into a separate county and parish." There is no other information about the fate of the bill until November 28, 1771, when the same or possibly a different bill is mentioned on page 107, Volume IX, Colonial Records, as follows: "Mr. Robertson and Mr. Slade introduced a bill for erecting part of the counties of Halifax and Tyrrell into a county and parish. On motion, read and passed." However, it, too, evidently failed to secure approval of the council or governor, as it never became effective.

William Slade lost out in an election contest when the House of Commons, on December 10, 1773, voted to accept a report from the committee on privileges and elections throwing out two illegal votes, which resulted in Thomas Stewart receiving a majority and being declared winner over Slade for a representative's seat in the lower house. The following year, on March 2, 1774, another petition for creating a new county was received by the assembly, and Messrs. Stewart, Frazier, Smithwick, and Spruill were involved in writing and securing passage of the act which finally resulted in officially establishing the county. The bill reads as follows (spelling and capitalization as in the original):

"A Bill for erecting a part of the Counties of Halifax and Tyrrell into one distinct County and Parish;

"Whereas, the great extent of the Counties of Halifax and Tyrrell renders it extremely troublesome and expensive to many of the Inhabitants thereof to attend the Courts of Justice, Elections and General Musters, and for the Sheriffs to make Public Collections; for the remedy whereof:

"Be it Enacted by the Governor, Council, and Assembly and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the passing of this Act, the said Counties be divided as follows, to wit: Beginning at the mouth of Kehukee Creek on Roanoke River and running a direct line to Edgecombe County line where it crosses the Tar River Road that leads by Nicholas Loyd's thence down Edgecombe line to Pitt County line, thence along Pitt line to Beaufort County line, thence along Beaufort line to the head of Welchs Creek near Stewart Hamilton's Plantation, thence down Welches Creek to Roanoke River, thence up the river to the beginning; and that all that part of the said Counties included within said bounds be thenceforth erected into a Distinct County and Parish and called and known by the Name of Martin County and Parish of St. Martin.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid That William Ebenezer Slade, Sr., William Outerbridge, Edmondson Edward Smithwick, James Sherrod, John Everitt and John Griffen be appointed Commissioners and they, or a majority of them, are hereby impowered and directed to run the said dividing lines between the said Counties agreeable to the directions in this Act before mentioned and return a fair plan thereof to the first Court to be held for the said County after running the said lines; for which services the said Commissioners shall be allowed by the Court five shillings proclamation money per day.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid that a Court for the said County of Martin be constantly held by the Justices thereof at Thomas Stewart's Plantation near the Public Landing on Roanoke River called Skewarkey upon the second Tuesdays in January, April, July and October in each and every year, as by the Laws of this Province shall be provided and shall be by Commission to the Justices of the said County directed.

"And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That a Poll Tax of Two Shillings be laid on each Taxable person of the said County of Martin per year for two years for Building a Courthouse. Prison and Stocks on the lands of said Thomas Stewart near Skewarkey Landing in the said County, which said Tax shall be collected by the Sheriff of the said County at such times and in the same manner as other Taxes are collected and shall be paid to the Commissioners hereinafter named or to the Person or Persons who shall be by them impowered to receive the same.

"And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That John Hardison, John McCasky, Samuel Smithwick, Samuel Whitley, Kenith McKenzie, John Everitt and Ebenezer Slade, Senior, or the majority of them or their Survivor or Survivors, be and are hereby appointed Commissioners and are hereby impowered and directed within six months after the passing hereof to agree and contract with workmen for erecting and Building a Courthouse, Prison and Stocks for use of the said County of Martin.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to debar the Sheriff of the Counties of Halifax and Tyrrel as they respectively, before passing of this Act, stood undivided to make distress for any levies, fees or other dues that shall be due from the Inhabitants of the said counties on the first day of May next in the same manner as by law the said Sheriffs might or could have done if the said Counties had remained undivided, and the said levies, fees and other dues shall be collected and Accounted for in the same manner as if this Act had never been made; anything herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid, that the County of Martin shall be and remain part of the District of Edenton, and the Sheriff of said County of Martin shall from time to time account for and pay to the Public Treasurer of the Northern District for the time being all public levies by him collected, or wherewith he shall stand chargeable in the same manner and under like pain and penalties as other Sheriffs.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid that it shall and may be lawful for the Justices of the Superior Court of the said County of Martin to nominate and appoint two freeholders to serve as Grand, and two as Petit Jurors at the Superior Court for the District of Edenton, any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. A list of which Jurors so nominated shall be delivered by the Clerk of the said County to the Sheriff, who shall and is hereby directed to summons the Persons so nominated to serve as Jurymen at the said Superior Court, which Jurymen so nominated shall have and receive the same allowance and shall be under the same rules, fines and restrictions as other jurymen are in the respective Counties of this Province."

Next follows several paragraphs dealing with removal of the Tyrrell County seat of government from where it was then located on Kendricks Creek in what is now Washington County to the plantation of Benjamin Spruill near the mouth of Scuppernong River. This is the approximate location of Columbia, the present county seat of Tyrrell. The act then continues:

"Provided, always, that nothing herein contained shall be construed, deemed or taken to alter or derogate from the rights and royal Prerogatives of his Majesty, his Heirs and successors of granting Letters of Incorporation to the said County and of ordering, appointing and directing the Election of a member or members to represent them in Assembly and of granting markets and fairs to be kept and held in the said County, but that the said right and prerogative shall and may at all times hereafter be exercised therein by his said Majesty, his Heirs and successors in as full and ample manner to all intents and purposes whatsoever as if this Act had never been made.

"And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid That Tyrrell County shall in all future General Assemblies which shall be held after the dissolution of the present assembly, choose and send to the General Assembly Three representatives and no more, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding."

Endorsements on the back of the bill, relative to its passage are as follows:

"In the Assembly 9th March, 1774, Read the first time and passed. By order Jas. Green, Jr., Clk. Sent by Mr. Fazier and Mr. Spruill.

"In the upper House 10 March, 1774. Read the first time and passed. By order, John Hawks, Clk.

"In the Assembly 12 March, 1774. Read the second time, amended and passed. By order, Jas. Green, Jr., Clk. Sent by Mr. Stewart and Mr. Spruill.

"In the upper House 12 March, 1774. Read the second time, amended and passed. By order, John Hawks, Clk.

"In the Assembly 14 March, 1774. Read the third time nad passed. By order, Jas. Green, Jr., Clk. Sent by Mr. Smithwick and Mr. Frazier.

"In the upper House 14 March, 1774. Read the third time and passed; ordered to be engrossed. By order, John Hawks, Clk."

The text of the act establishing the county is copied from photostats of the originals, which are in the North Carolina State Archives. This would indicate that the county's actual birth date was March 14, 1774, when the act was finally passed and engrossed, and not March 2, as contained in other accounts, which was the date the Assembly convened in New Bern.

Thus what is now Martin County was originally a part of Albemarle County, which, being the first settled, was the first organized. Date of the incorporation of Albemarle County is not definite, but probably somewhere around 1663. It was composed of three precincts, Carteret, Berkeley, and Shaftesbury, named in honor of three of the Lords Proprietors. Shaftesbury (later to be known as Chowan Precinct) embraced the territory which included the present bounds of Martin County.

Chowan Precinct was formed in 1670, and Martin was a part of it. Next it was in Bertie County, established in 1722, with a large portion of it being assigned to Tyrrell when that county was set up in

1729, the remainder going into Edgecombe in 1741 before breaking away with Halifax when the latter was established in 1758. Martin's two parts, taken from Tyrrell and Halifax, were reunited by the 1774 act under its own name, and the boundaries have remained substantially the same since, with the exception of some relatively minor adjustments in the lines with Pitt, Edgecombe and Beaufort in 1784, 1793, 1805, 1816 and 1937.

The county is said by early historians to have been named in honor of Josiah Martin, last royal governor of North Carolina, who was in office when the act was passed establishing the county. However, he assumed the duties of the office at a time when royal governors were going out of favor with American colonists, especially so in his case, since he followed Governor Tryon, who was one of the most hated and despised men to rule the colony for the English crown.

There are some historians who are of the opinion that the name was selected to honor one of the patron saints of France; and since the people of the colony, including many in the newly formed county, were not too cordial to the royal governor, it is highly probable that the name would have been changed except that more important events were transpiring.

Independence fever was high at that time, and after successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War, which began a little over a year later, it was decided to retain the name of the county to honor Alexander Martin, of Guilford County, a member of the Philadelphia convention which wrote the Constitution and who was twice elected governor of the state, first in 1782 and again i n1789.

Origin of the county's name continued a moot question on into the next century. Asa Biggs, one of the county's most outstanding political figures who became United States Senator and federal judge, as well as a Confederate States judge, in writing a brief history of the county in September, 1857, posed a very pithy comment on the name selected. After reciting the conclusion of the act creating "a Distinct County and Parish and called and known by the name of Martin County and Parish of St. Martin," he asks the question: "Was it intended thus to canonize the Royal Governor as a Saint?" And he underlined the word "Saint" as well as the question mark.

The commissioners appointed by the act to run the dividing lines between the counties "and make a fair plan thereof" evidently did their work quickly and well. Asa Biggs' historical account says the first Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, which the act provided was not to be held until the county lines were established, met on the second Tuesday in April, 1774, on the plantation of Thomas Stewart near

"Skewarkey." This was about a month after the county was established.

The court was held under a commission of peace, directed to William Williams, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Wiggins, Jr., John Everitt, James Sherrod, John Lewellen, William Outterbridge, John Hardison, John Stewart, Francis Ward, Thomas Hunter, and Kenneth McKenzie. At this court six of those appointed—Francis Ward, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison, Kenneth McKenzie, John Lewellen and James Sherrod—qualified for their commissions by taking the oaths prescribed by law "and signed the Test." At the same court, Thomas Stewart qualified as clerk of the court under a commission from the Hon. Samuel Sturwick, (Smith?) Esq.; and Edward Smithwick qualified as coroner under a commission from the governor. The court, at that time, was in effect the governing body of the county.

The court recommended three names to the governor, one of whom was to be commissioned sheriff of the new county for the ensuing year. The names recommended were Kenneth McKenzie, Thomas Hunter and John Hardison; and subsequently, during the same term, Kenneth McKenzie produced a commission from the governor, and became the county's first sheriff.

The following order was issued by the court: "Ordered, that Thomas Stewart, clerk of the court, purchase the following law books for the use of the county, viz: Jacob's Law Dictionary or Cunningham's, Burns' Justices of the Peace, Modern Entries, Swinburn on Wills, and the Provincial Laws, neatly bound, and the sheriff is ordered to pay the said clerk for the same, out of moneys to be raised for the contingent charges of the county."

Another order issued reads: "Ordered that a tax of one shilling proclamation money per poll be collected by the sheriff from all the taxable persons within this county for the purpose of defraying the contingent charges thereof." An additional tax of one shilling was subsequently imposed, according to the Asa Biggs account of the first court.

The county was divided into five tax districts at this session and justices were appointed to take the lists of taxables, but their names are not included in the Biggs' report. Two men, John Hardison, Esq., and John Stewart, Esq., were designated to serve as grand jurors and two others, Edward Samuel Smithwick and Edmund Edward Smithwick, as petit jurors at the Court of Oyer and Terminer for the District of Edenton, which was to be held at Edenton on July.

One of the first courts in the new county was said to have been held under a tree on the lands of John Griffin, who lived near Ballard's

Bridge in what is now Poplar Point Township. There are no records to substantiate the claim, but since Griffin was one of the commissioners appointed in the act creating the county, it is likely that the court action which took place there was of a minor nature.

At the next session of the county Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, held in July, 1774, William Williams, Esq., presented a commission from "His Excellency, Josiah Martin, Esq.," appointing him Register of Deeds for the County of Martin and he was qualified and gave bond. The first grand jury of the county was selected at this session and was composed of the following 17 persons: John Ballard, foreman; Thomas Reddick, John Reddick, David Reddick, Job Cherry, Edward Byrd, John Swain, Joseph Price, Joseph Biggs, John Ross, Ephraim Kenady, John Eastwood, William Griffin, John Kenady, Robert Lenoir, James Biggs and William Brewer.

There were no towns in Martin County at the time of its establishment in 1774, and evidently this was the reason the commissioners appointed in the act were directed to hold courts and prepare to build a courthouse, prison and stocks on the lands of Thomas Stewart near Skewarkey Landing on Roanoke River. Some five years later, the 1779 assembly adopted an act erecting a town on 78 acres of Thomas Hunter's land at Squhawky (Skewarkey) and directing that it be called Williamston, which became the permanent county seat. It is not known whether this land was acquired by Thomas Hunter from Thomas Stewart after the county was established, or if the Hunter land was simply a more convenient location for the seat of the county government than that originally proposed and that the population and the county offices gradually moved westerly to where they are presently located.

That the people of the new county were to be active in the coming struggle for independence is shown by their action in sending Edmund Smithwick to a general meeting of county and town representatives held at New Bern less than six months after the county was established. This had followed a proclamation by Governor Josiah Martin complaining that meetings were being held without legal authority, that resolutions and plans derogatory to royal authority had been issued, and he ordered the people not to attend and the king's officers to oppose further such meetings.

Completely disregarding the governor's proclamation, the first assembly entirely independent of British authority was held in New Bern on August 25, 1774. Including Edmund Smithwick, who represented Martin, there were 53 representatives present from 29 counties and five towns in the province. Although they expressed complete loyalty to the British crown, members of this gathering, which was designated a Provincial Congress, outlined the jealousy with which their rights as freeman were regarded and the fixed purpose by which they would be maintained.

The assembly, of which John Harvey of Perquimans was elected speaker or moderator, approved a plan for holding a general congress of all the colonies at Philadelphia in September. They elected William Hooper of Orange County, Joseph Hewes of Edenton, and Richard Caswell of Dobbs County to represent North Carolina.

Asa Biggs, in his brief history of Martin County written in 1857, confirms that Edmund Smithwick represented the county at the general meeting of deputies in New Bern August 25, 1774. He also says Martin sent eight representatives—John Everett, William Slade, John Stewart, William Williams, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison and Samuel Smithwick—to a meeting in Hillsboro, date not mentioned, but possibly during the same year or early in 1775.

Wheeler's "Historical Sketches of North Carolina" says Martin sent six representatives—John Everitt, William Slade, John Stewart, William Williams, Whitmel Hill and Kenneth McKenzie—to the third session of the Provincial Congress, which began at Hillsboro on August 21, 1775. It was at this session that the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence which had been adopted in Charlotte May 20, 1775, was presented by Samuel Johnston of Chowan, moderator of the Congress. Johnston was later to become governor and the first United States Senator from North Carolina, and he lived in Williamston for a time after serving in those capacities.

The following year, on April 4, 1776, a Provincial Congress was held at Halifax, to which five representatives were sent from this county: William Williams, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison and Samuel Smithwick. This was the session at which the famous "Halifax Resolves" were adopted on April 12, 1776, directing that delegates from North Carolina to the Continental Congress "be empowered to concur with delegates from the other Colonies in declaring their independency...." Both the Mecklenburg and Halifax declarations came before the national Declaration of Independence was proclaimed July 4, 1776.

Prior to this, at the third Provincial Congress meeting in Hillsboro August 21, 1775—attended by John Everitt, William Slade, John Stewart, William Williams, Whitmel Hill and Kenneth McKenzie of this county—steps were taken to completely sever governmental relations with England. Governor Martin had fled from New Bern and was aboard a British warship in the Cape Fear River. He issued a proclamation from there denouncing the Hillsboro assembly, but that group retaliated by resolving that "the proclamation was a false, scurrilous, malicious and seditious libel," and directed that it be burned by the common hangman.

The assembly took steps to set up a government by directing the origanization of two regiments of 500 men and vesting the civil government in a Provincial Council of 23 men for the whole colony, a District Committee of Safety for each of the six districts, and county and town committees for the local government of each county and town.

William Williams of Martin was commissioned as adjutant for the First Regiment when it was organized in 1775, according to Wheeler's "History of North Carolina," which says "names of the officers are particularly noticed, as these men were called into active service out of the state in the Continental Line." How long Williams remained in the First Regiment is not known, but a short time later he became commanding officer of the Martin County Militia, or Minute Men, with the rank of colonel, retaining that rank until he resigned some time after he had been elected the county's first state senator.

Whitmel Hill of Martin was one of two members of the Provincial Council from the Edenton District, which included Martin County. Members of this council were, in effect, the ruling body of the entire colony. The chairman, Samuel Johnston—then of Edenton, but who later lived in Williamston for a number of years—was elected by the Congress, while the two members from the district were chosen by delegates at a district meeting.

The District Committee of Safety was made up of a president and twelve members for each of the six districts, chosen by delegates. Kenneth McKenzie of Martin was a member of the committee from the Edenton District. This group was authorized to receive information, censure and punish delinquents, and it also had supervisory powers over the county and town safety committees, duties of the latter corresponding roughly to those of present-day boards of county and town commissioners. Members of the county and town committees were chosen by freeholders of each of the subdivisions. Names of members of Martin County's first Committee of Safety are not to be found in any of the available records, and there were no incorporated towns in the county at that time.

In addition to the two regiments of Continental Line troops authorized by the Provincial Congress in 1775, ten companies of 50 men each, called a battalion, were raised in each of the six districts. They were called Minute Men, or militia, and were supposed to serve principally in the areas where they lived. That Col. William Williams was for only a short time adjutant of the First Regiment of North Carolina troops organized in 1775 is shown by the fact that he commanded the militia of Martin and Bertie counties when it was called to active duty for an expedition in February of the following year.

In this connection, Asa Biggs, in his brief history of Martin County, reports an interesting entry in the minutes of the April, 1776, session of the county court, as follows: "On motion, it is ordered that all apprentices, who (en)listed in the militia in the county, to go on the expedition to Cross Creek (Fayetteville), return immediately to their respective masters." This would indicate that some Martin County people were involved in the mobilization at or near what is now Fayetteville preceding the Moore's Creek Battle in New Hanover County on February 27, 1776, when Tory forces under Highlander General Donald McDonald were defeated by the North Carolina militia under Colonels Richard Caswell and Alexander Lillington, with McDonald being captured and the royalist forces completely routed.

Whether or not the Martin Minute Men actually were involved in the fighting at Moore's Creek—the first major battle action of the Revolution on North Carolina soil—is problematical; but there is no doubt about Colonel Williams commanding a unit composed of Martin and Bertie men which proceeded to the Fayetteville section about the time of that battle. This is proven by the preceding entry from the county court records and the following resolution of appreciation adopted by the Provincial Council on Saturday, March 2, 1776: "Resolved, That Col. William Williams with the Martin and Bertie troops under (his) command do return to their respective counties with the same, first sending off to Col. James under a sufficient guard, such ammunition as he now has in his possession. This Council in the warmest terms returns to Gentlemen Officers and Soldiers from the Counties of Martin and Bertie their thanks for their readiness and spirited conduct in marching against the enemies of their Country."

Colonel Williams continued as commanding officer of the Martin County militia for a brief period after his election as the first state senator from the county in 1777. He submitted his resignation in a letter to Governor Richard Caswell, dated April 2, 1778, recommending appointment of his nephew, Whitmel Hill, to succeed him. The letter follows: "I am at present First Colo. of the County of Martin, but owing to my infirmities, I am not able to act so as to render service in that way. I therefore desire to resign my Commission and do by this letter resign, and hope your Excellency will make commissions to the following persons (to wit): Mr. Whitmel Hill, first Colo.; Mr. Thomas

Wiggins, second Colo.; Mr. Kenneth McKenzie, first Major; Mr. John Hardison, second Major."

Much of Martin County's early history is somewhat sketchy and comes from private papers, letters, and scattered records from counties of which it was once a part. This is especially true of the Revolutionary War period, the county having been established just prior to the beginning of that struggle, and many of its official records for about a hundred years afterwards having been destroyed in the courthouse fire of 1884.

Gathered from several different sources, mostly state records, there are some references to the Continental Army career of another prominent county citizen, William Slade. According to Wheeler's "Historical Sketches of North Carolina," Slade was among the six representatives from Martin County who attended the third session of the Provincial Congress at Hillsboro on August, 1775. In one of the state records, it is noted that Slade was commissioned an ensign in Phillips' Company of the Fourth N. C. Regiment on May 1, 1777, while another entry records the date of his commissioning as January 2, 1777. He was promoted to second lieutenant and made adjutant of the unit on June 1, 1778 and advanced to first lieutenant on June 25, 1779. For a time in 1778 he was assigned as "acting ensign" in the First N. C. Battalion commanded by Col. Thomas Clark. He resigned his commission on February 18, 1880. Slade was a member of the first board of commissioners of the town of Williamston when it was incorporated in 1779 and was appointed solicitor for the First Circuit Court in 1800.

The North Carolina General Assembly, meeting in New Bern in 1778, adopted an act to raise 2,648 men to complete the formation of the Continental Battalions. They were to be recruited and detached from the militia of North Carolina, and Martin County was assigned a quota of 37 men. The same year Martin was added to the Halifax Military District, and James Hogun, colonel of the Seventh Regiment, in a report to Governor Caswell dated June 23, 1778, said troops from Martin County were then in Halifax. No number was mentioned, but it is considered likely that they were the 37 men the county had been assigned to recruit by the special legislative act of April 14th.

The state senate adopted a resolution February 11, 1779, to reimburse Whitmel Hill, Esq., 252 pounds, 5 shilling and 2 pence, "being the balance of bounty money advanced by him to Volunteers and Balloted men of Martin County." The resolution was sent to the House of Commons, which rejected it and appointed John Hunt to settle public accounts.

For some reason a controversy developed, the Senate rejecting Hunt's appointment and naming three auditors to settle the account, the presiding officer explaining: "The Senate would wish to avoid giving the public reason to say that instead of employing men adequate to the service of the state, we endeavor to render offices to the convenience of the individual. We hope the Commons will reconsider the resolution. . . and adopt the same; otherwise the Senate consider this as a protest against the proceedings of the Commons, who, from partiality to an individual, deny justice to the public." The House of Commons then concurred with the resolution of the Senate, and Hill was reimbursed for the advances he had made.

Again referring to Judge Asa Biggs' notes on the early history of the county, he wrote that at the October, 1774, term Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, the first list of "taxables" was returned, stating that nothing appeared on the list except white and black polls and "chair wheels." The number of whites was 553 and blacks 379, he stated, adding an unexplained exclamatory note: "The number of chair wheels, however, is two!" He also reported that the only lawyers whose names appeared upon the minutes as practicing in that court were Thomas Jones and Joseph Long. He did not indicate where they were from.

At the July term of 1775, Thomas Hunter qualified as sheriff under a commission from Governor Martin. He evidently succeeded Kenneth McKenzie, the first sheriff, who qualified and assumed duties of the office during the first term of court held about a month after the county was chartered in March, 1774.

Probably due to the stirring events taking place in the political arena of the colony about that time, court sessions were intermittent and of short duration for upwards of two years after this. Judge Biggs' account says there was no court in October, 1775, for want of a sufficient number of justices, John Stewart and Kenneth McKenzie adjourning the term. At the January session in 1776, "there was no business for the grand jury, and the king's attorney was sick and not able to attend," and the grand jury was therefore immediately discharged.

For the next several terms of the court, all cases were continued until the succeeding one. There is an entry at the April term in 1776 ordering apprentices who went on the Cross Creek expedition to return to their masters immediately; and in July, 1776, it was recorded that Thomas Hunter had resigned as sheriff and John Hardison was appointed in his place, the minutes for that term being signed by John Hardison, Kenneth McKenzie and John Everitt. Judge Biggs says it is probable there were no more sessions until January, 1777, when the court was reorganized under provisions of the constitution and ordinances adopted by a State Congress held at Halifax in November and December, 1776.

Martin County sent five representatives to this Congress: William Williams, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison and Samuel Smithwick. On December 18th the State Constitution and Bill of Rights was adopted, believed to be the work of Thomas Jones, Thomas Burke and Richard Caswell. Caswell was elected the first governor of the State under terms of ordinances approved by the Congress, and it was he who made appointments of justices who were to reorganize the government of Martin County in January, 1777.

Following is the text of the commission issued by the first governor appointing 22 justices of the peace for Martin County:

"State of North Carolina:

"To John Hardison, Edward Smithwick, William Slade, William Sherrod, John Lewellin, John Everitt, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Wiggins, Thomas Hunter, Kenneth McKenzie, Francis Ward, Samuel Smithwick, Samuel Williams, John Ross, John Kennedy, John Griffin, Nathan Mayo, Blake Baker Wiggins, Joshua Taylor, John Perry, James Moore, Thomas Reddick, Esqrs., Greeting:

"Know ye, That we have assigned you, and every of you, jointly and severally, our Justices to keep our peace in the County of Martin, and to keep, or cause to be kept, all Laws and Ordinances made for the Good of the Peace and for Conservation of the Same, and to cause to come before you or any of you all offenders against the peace and good government of our said State; to find Sureties for the Peace or otherwise; and in all things to proceed according to such Statute Laws, such parts of the Common Law, and Acts of the Assembly, heretofore in use here, not destructive of or repugnant to, or inconsistent with, the Freedom and Independence of this State or the United States of America, not abrogated, repealed, expired, or become obsolete; and such resolves of the conventions and Congresses of this State, which have not had their effect, or been repealed; and also to execute or reform any such Power or Duty, as any ordinance of the late Congress of this State, hath appointed or required. And we have assigned you, or any three of you, our Justices, to enquire by the oaths of good and lawful men of the county aforesaid, of all Petit Larcenies and other crimes of which our county courts and sessions of the peace within the State are empowered by Law, Ordinance or Resolve to inquire and to issue process against persons indicted before you until they be apprehended and to hear, try and determine all and singular the offenses of which you are hereby authorized to inquire and to punish and chastise the persons offending, and every of them, for their offences by corporal punishment, fines, Amerciaments, forfeiture or otherwise as ought to be done according to the Laws, Statutes, Ordinances and Resolves in force in our said State; And for the better punishing the offences aforesaid you or any three of you shall hold County Courts and Sessions of the Peace in said county on the days appointed for holding County Courts by the Act of the Assembly last in force in North Carolina; and to enforce all laws relative to Orphans, Guardians, Probate of wills and granting letters testamentary and of Administration; to take proof of Deeds and granting commissions for taking the privy examination of feme coverts and Highways, in such manner and under such restrictions as County Courts and Sessions of the Peace or Justices of the Peace may and can execute and enforce the same, pursuant to an Ordinance of the late Congress for this State entitled An Ordinance to enforce the Statute Laws and such parts of the Common Laws and Acts of Assembly heretofore in use here. Witness: Richard Caswell, Governor, Captain General and Commander in Chief in and over the said State under his hand and seal at Arms at New Bern, the eleventh day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven, and in the first year of our Independence.

"(Signed) R. Caswell.

"By His Excellency's Command.

"(Signed) J. Glasgow,
Sec. of the State."

A busy session of the court was held on January 14, 1777, when apparently there was a complete reorganization of the county government "agreeable to an Ordinance of the Convention at Halifax in December, 1776." The quotation marks are those of Judge Asa Biggs, who apparently was quoting, in September, 1857, from records probably destroyed later in the Martin County courthouse fire of 1884.

Present for the reorganization meeting in January, 1777, were the following seven men: John Hardison, Thomas Hunter, Nathan Mayo, Francis Ward, Samuel Smithwick, James Moore and Samuel Williams. Each subscribed to "the oath prescribed by Congress" and the oath of a justice of the peace. The court appointed Thomas Hunter clerk; John Hardison, sheriff; Edward Smithwicks, coroner; and constables for the several districts. Blake B. Wiggins, John Everitt, John Perry and Francis Ward were appointed grand jurors for the "Court of Oyer" at Edenton March 24, 1777. Justices were also appointed to take the list of taxables in the several districts, then seven in number, and the constables were ordered to "warn all masters, mistresses or overseers of Familys" to give in their list of taxables.

It was at this session that a series of entries began which culminated in vanishing from the records of a name which appeared in practically all of the early documents. It was Thomas Stewart, upon whose lands the first court was held and who was appointed the first clerk of court of the county.

Asa Biggs' history says: "The late clerk, Thomas Stewart, was ordered to deliver up the records, dockets and other books and papers belonging to the office to Thomas Hunter and the order concludes 'we oblige ourselves to indemnify him, said Stewart, from all damages which he may sustain by so doing.' At the April term, 1777, Thomas Hunter exhibited his commission as clerk from his Excellency Richard Caswell, Esq., and was qualified.

"At October term, 1777, this entry appears: 'Thomas Stewart appeared before the court, being cited under the first clause of the Act of Assembly; it appearing to the court that he did not come under said clause was discharged. It is further ordered that said Thomas Stewart personally appear at next court to take the oath under the latter clause of the aforesaid act. The next court he appeared and was discharged.' "

The court was reorganized again at the session of July, 1777. Present were "the Worshipful John Hardison, Samuel Smithwick, Edward Smithwick, John Kennedy, Francis Ward, Thomas Reddick, Arthur Bardin, John Ross, William Slade, John Griffin, B. B. Wiggins, John Perry, and William Outterbridge, who took the oath prescribed by the General Assembly and oath of Justices of the Peace." Thomas Hunter was unanimously appointed clerk; John Hardison, sheriff; Blake B. Wiggins, register; and John Johnston, attorney for the State.

During this period, great stress was placed upon the oath of allegiance prescribed by the State Assembly. Enforcement was in the hands of the County Committees, provision for which was made at the August, 1775, session of the Provincial Assembly. Wheeler's 1851 "History of North Carolina" says the "test oath," to which all persons had to subscribe, was paramount to the oath of allegiance to the British crown. County committees had positive control of their counties, and did not hesitate to put in jail or send to the whipping post those who were convicted of disrespectful language toward the cause of American liberty.

Judge Biggs says Hardy Stallings and Benjamin Woolard appeared in open court and took the oath prescribed by the "Act of the Assembly for all persons suspected or disaffected." The court ordered that Thomas Hunter be allowed eight pounds for serving as clerk of the committee, the last two words being underlined for emphasis. Names of those comprising the committee are not available.

At the March, 1778, term of court, steps were taken to require administration of the oath of allegiance to all male free persons over 16 years of age in the county. The following were appointed to receive the oaths in the seven districts of the county: Francis Ward, Esq., District No. 1; Samuel Smithwick, Esq., District No. 2; John Kennedy, Esq., District 3; John Griffin, Esq., District 4; Nathan Mayo, Esq., District 5; John Everitt, Esq., District 6; and Samuel Williams, Esq., District No. 7.

Not all of Martin County's residents during those early days were patriots, in the sense that they supported the cause of freedom for the American colonies. The county had its share of loyalists or Tories, who continued their support of the English crown even after the Revolutionary War began. One of the most prominent was John Lewellen or Lewelling, one of the twelve justices of the peace commissioned by Governor Josiah Martin when the county was chartered and who was also one of the six who qualified to hold the first county court in April, 1774. Lewelling was caught and convicted of particiating in a conspiracy to murder some of the leaders of the revolutionary movement. Sentenced to hang, he was placed in jail at Edenton to await execution. His wife secured the assistance of a number of prominent persons in the county in petitioning for clemency; and the following entry in State Records, Volume 22, page 929, shows how close it came for him:

"At a Council (of State) held at Kinston on the 28th day of September, 1777: Present—The Honorables William Gray, William Haywood, Edward Starkey, Thomas Bonner, Esquires.

"The Governor laid before the Board the petition of William Williams, Nathan Mayo and others, setting forth that John Lewelling, at the Court of Oyer and Terminer and Sessions of the Peace for the District of Edenton, was convicted of high treason and sentenced to be executed for the same, on Tuesday next, praying that the Governor would respite the execution of the said John Lewelling and grant him a reprieve.

"Resolved, That the Governor be advised to respite the said execution and reprieve the said John Lewelling until the sitting of the General Assembly."

The action of the council was signed by William Gray, president; W. Haywood, Edward Starkey and Thomas Hunter. According to other records, Lewelling gained his complete freedom later.

Another case of sedition is mentioned in the minutes of the September, 1780, term of Martin County court, according to Judge Biggs. At that time "Willis Belch was brought before the court for certain speeches, etc., against the State and is recognized in the sum of 20,000 pounds and his surety in a like sum for his appearance at Halifax to answer the charge, and five witnesses were recognized in the sum of 1,000 pounds to appear and testify." There is no further mention of the case in the records, and it is not known what disposition was made of the matter.

A system for levying and collecting taxes, three assessors and one tax gatherer were appointed for each of the seven districts. At this court, the sheriff was ordered to summon juries to settle the boundaries of lands in dispute in 14 cases, and the following order was issued to assist in prosecution of the Revolutionary War:

"Ordered that the following captains, in their respective districts, procure the following clothes for the Army:

"Captain Ward, 3 hats, 15 yards Linen, 6 yds. Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 6 pairs of shoes and stockings; Captain Robert Daniel, 4 hats, 17 yds. Linen, 8 yds. Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 8 pairs of shoes and stockings; Captain Kennedy, 5 hats, 19 yds. Linen, 9 yds. of Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 9 pairs of shoes and stockings;

"Captain Griffin, 3 hats, 16 yds. Linen, 7 yds. of Woollen or double wove cloath, 7 pairs of shoes and stockings; Capt. Everitt, 4 hats, 16 yds. Linen, 8 yds. of Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 8 pairs of shoes and stockings; Capt. Mayo, 4 hats, 16 yds. Linen, 8 yds. Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 8 pairs of shoes and stockings; Capt. Bryan, 5 hats, 17 yds. Linen, 10 yds. of Woollen or double wove cotton cloath, 10 pairs of shoes and stockings."

At the June term of 1779 William Slade, Kenneth McKenzie and Thomas Hunter were appointed commissioners to take into their hands all British and confiscated property "and that they give bond agreeable to the Act of the Assembly in that case made and provided."

The economy of the colonies became a shambles after the government broke its ties with Great Britain. Much of the trade was carried on by barter, and paper money dwindled in value until it became almost worthless. As an example of the inflated value of the currency in 1780, the following orders were issued by the county committee: "It is ordered that the assessors be allowed the sum of twenty-four pounds per day for their services," "Order that Thomas Hunter be allowed the sum of fifteen hundred pounds for his ex-officio services as clerk for the year 1780." In 1781 the constables and assessors were allowed 100 pounds per day each for their work. Possibly the most revealing order is that in June, 1782, John Johnson was appointed attorney for the state and allowed "25 pounds specie or paper currency at the legal exchange, to wit: Eight Hundred for One."

The value of money during this period was sometimes expressed in pounds, shillings and pence and sometimes in dollars and cents, occasionally the different designations appearing in the same article. This can be seen in the Biggs' historical account of the assessment of property values in Williamston at different periods: 1801, $7,818; 1805, $15,288; and 1856, $74,575; while the 1804 tax on 167,744 acres of land, assessed at 10 pence per acre, totaled 69 pounds, 17 shillings. The taxes on town property the same year amounted to 4 pounds, 12 shillings, 11 pence. Total taxes for the year amounted to 265 pounds, 5 shillings, 9 pence, including 1,526 polls at 2 shillings, sixpence each.

Due to the fragmentary nature of the history of the county during the Revolution, names are almost totally unobtainable of all those men who served in the Continental Army or even in the militia, which undoubtedly played a prominent part in some of the military actions which took place in the State. There are a few State records of troops in service at the time, but the rosters do not list home addresses and it is virtually impossible to determine from which counties they came.

There is one list, contained in a letter from Col. Kenneth McKenzie to Governor Abner Nash, written June 9, 1780, including the names of 38 volunteers and 21 "drafts for the present expedition," nature of which is not explained. Text to the letter and accompanying lists follow (State Records, Vol. 14, Pages 838-839):

"His Excellency, Abner Nash, Esq.:

"Honorable Sir: Finding my former draught on the Treasury inadequate to the Exigencies of this County on the present occasion, am under the necessity to address your Excellency for a Warrant for the further sum of sixteen hundred pounds, and have inclosed my Bond for that purpose. Also have inclosed a list of the Drafts and Volunteers raised in this County for the present expedition. I am in want of a dozen blank Militia Commissions, one Sheriff's (ditto).

"I am with the highest Esteem, Your Excellency's most obedient servant, (Col.) Kenneth McKenzie, Martin County, June 4, 1780."

"Volunteers: Thomas Watson, Joseph Reading, Joseph Lee, Needam Bryan, John Parker, Ezekiel Moore, Christopher Hynds, John Garrot, Jesse Staten, John Davis, David Caraway, Simon Daniel, John Reeditt, Jr., Wm. Drew, Thos. Williams, Bentley Manning, Jonathan Cherry, John Sumner, Jacob Morris, Martin Voyce, Joseph Cooper, James Worsley, Joseph Taylor, Benj. Cippin, Marion Manning, Edw. Mizell, David Everitt, Benj. Hardison, David Hinson, Abraham Johnson, Ephriam Coward, Wm. Purvis, Isaac Boyd, Jones Wood, Stephen Outerbridge, Ebenezer Slade, Lorton Cooper, John Manning.

"Drafts: Samuel Moore, John Bonner, Wm. Whitfield, Wm. Turlinton, David Smithwick, Elijah Brice, John Harrel, Joseph Hinson Harner, James Robeson, George Ethenham, John Cross, Joshua Hodges, Willis Whitfield, Wm. Swanner, Ephraim Wyatte, James Brumfield, Henry Batch, Sam Ballard, Swain Daniel, John Hynds, Wm. Blackwell."

The late Warren H. Biggs, Williamston historian, obtained a list origin unknown, of seven men from this county who were receiving Revolutionary War pensions prior to the census of 1840. Their names, and the amounts they had received up to that time, were given as follows:

John Pulley, who served as a private in Crane's company of artillery, was the first listed and had drawn, by far, the largest amount of the entire group, $1,506.30. His pension had started June 26, 1818, but his age was not given, as was the case in all of the others. It is likely that his payment was based on disability, as pensions for all the other recipients started on the same date, November 4, 1831, and the amounts ranged only from $58.32 to $200.

John Bonner, age 76, private and sergeant, N. C. Militia, $129.71; John Clark, age 76, private, N. C. Militia, $147.36; Abraham Johnson, age 73, private N. C. Militia, $60; William May, age 87, private, N. C. Militia, $125; James Medford, age 76, private, N. C. Militia, $66.65; William Mizell, Sr., age 77, sergeant, N. C. Militia, $132.48; Thomas Price, age 78, private in cavalry, N. C. Militia, $62.80; Raleigh Roebuck, age 77, private in Virginia Militia, but moved to Martin County after war, $200; Daniel Roberson, age 76, private, N. C. Militia, $79.98; and John Smithwick, Sr., age 76, private in cavalry, N. C. Militia, $58.32.

Some years later, probably nine, the Census of 1840 listed only three pensioners in Martin County, and only one of them, John Clark, then 85, was included in the preceding list. The other two were William Price, 79, and William Ross, 79. The amount they had received up to that time was not given in the census report.

There is a record of an earlier pension. An entry in State Records, Vol. 22, page 423, states that Moses Griffin was awarded 20 pounds by an inferior court held in New Bern May 15, 1773, as full payment of one year's allowance from the public for disabling wounds received in the Battle of Alamance. The claim was attested by William Slade and the amount was paid by Richard Caswell, who was a colonel in command of a detachment of militia that fought on the side of the British Crown under Governor Tryon at the Battle of Alamance on May 16, 1771. Although Martin County had not been created at that time, it is believed that Griffin and Slade came from this section.

There are some scattered records of county citizens serving in the militia during the early years of the new nation. Field officers in 1784 were listed as follows: Nathan Mayo, lieutenant colonel, commanding; John Ballard, lieutenant colonel (who probably died during the period, since the word "dead" appears after his name); James Ballard, first major; Benjamin Whitley, second major. In 1789 it was noted that James Ballard had been promoted to lieutenant colonel, Benjamin Whitley had moved up to first major, and Henry Cooper was second major.

Then in 1792, William Williams was the lieutenant colonel commanding the unit. Henry Cooper had been promoted to lieutenant colonel, John Higgons (?) Jones was first major and John Reddick was second major. In 1798 James Carmun was commissioned second major.

Coming on into the nineteenth century, Miles Hollowell became a second major in 1803; and in 1806 Lt. Col. Jeremiah Slade became the commanding officer; Abner Cockburn was first major and Andrew Joyner was second major. In 1808 and 1809 the Martin Militia was in the Third Division of the Fifth Brigade, according to the state adjutant general's report, and was listed as supplying eight companies and 597 men. Their arms consisted of 29 muskets and 376 shotguns. It is believed the muskets were the property of the state, while the shotguns were privately owned. The 1809 report showed the county had the same officers, but Major Cockburn's name was changed to Coburn.

The adjutant general's report for 1810 listed the field officers as the same as in 1809; but listed the unit as having eight captains, eight first lieutenants, no second lieutenants and eight ensigns. The staff included one adjutant, one quartermaster, one quartermaster sergeant, and one paymaster. Non-commissioned officers included one sergeant major, one drum major, one fife major, 32 sergeants, 32 corporals, eight drummers, six fifers, 487 privates subject to orindary duty, 12 privates exempt except in cases of insurrection; total strength, 612. Names of men below the rank of field officers are not available.

The 1810 adjutant general's report also showed arms and accoutrements for the Martin militia as follows: 27 swords, 5 espontoons, 29 muskets, no rifles, 386 shotguns, no bayonets, 8 iron ramrods, 75 cartridge boxes, 30 shot-bags, 5 powder horns, 8 drums, 8 fifes, 5 colors, 10 suits of uniforms. The 1811 report was substantially the same, except there was a notation: "Last reviewed by Major General in 1805."

Colonel Jeremiah Slade, commissioned in 1806, commanded the county militia from that time until he was promoted to brigadier general in December, 1812, and placed in command of the Fifth Brigade, Seventh Division. He was succeeded in command of the county militia in 1813 by Andrew Joyner, with Durham Davis as second major. Davis was promoted to first major the same year and James Reddick was made second major at the same time. In 1815 Durham Davis was succeeded as first major by James Reddick and Smith Burroughs was commissioned second major.

A muster roll of the Detached Militia, organized in August, 1814, included the following Martin County men in the Second Regiment:

Lemuel Ballard, Obediah Bullock, James Belflower, Barnaby Brown, Redding Brown, Zachariah Browney, Hardie Cobb, Littleberry Carlisle, Harred Craft, Jesse Cow, Jr., Jonathan Callaway, John Douglas, Wright Evans, Michael Ellis, Jesse Griffin, Edward Griffin, Joshua Griffin, John Haislip, Branson Haislip, William Hassell, Joshua Hodge, Edward Hardison, Jesse Harrell, Benjamin Hallsey, Theophilus Jenkins, Lemual James, Lovett Lanier, Josephus Moore, Ith Medford, Marcum Manning, Mathew Pickelson, Simon Perry, John Petty, William Pennywell, Hardy B. Price, John Quin, William Roebuck, Reddick Rawls, Abraham Rawls, Joshua Robinson, Jr., Josiah Rogerson, Bond Syawls, Joel Smithwick, Reuben Salenger, William Swain, James Swain, Samuel Spruel, David Wynne, Henry Wynns and George Wynns. Bullock, Callaway, Hassell, Roebuck, Rogerson, Smithwick and Swain were listed among the soldiers who fought in the War of 1812 against Great Britain.

Maurice Moore, a forebear of the Moores of Martin County, was lieutenant colonel about the same time and commanded the Third Regiment, comprised of men from Onslow, New Hanover, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, Sampson, Roberson, Cumberland, Moore, Richmond, and Anson Counties.

General Jeremiah Slade continued in command of the 5th Brigade, 7th Division, until 1817, when he was succeeded by Eli B. Whitaker. In 1818 Colonel Joseph Williams commanded the county militia, with James Reddick as first major and William Watts as second major. This continued the same through 1819 and 1820, after which there is a break in the records until 1842, when Asa Biggs is listed as the colonel commanding, date of his commission being 1832. Harmon

Cason is listed as lieutenant colonel and Bruce Roebuck was major in 1842.

Contained in Judge Asa Biggs' 1857 "Brief History of Martin County" is a list of 30 names, which he said constituted the names of soldiers from the county who served in the War of 1812 with Great Britain "as well as can now be ascertained." Headed by the name of Col. Andrew Joyner, who commanded the Martin County Militia from 1812 through 1815, the remainder of the list follows: Micajah Perry, John Simmons, Samuel Rogers, Raleigh Roebuck, William Roebuck, John Rogerson, James Bennett, James B. Williams, William Revels, Allen Ray, John H. Powers, John Timmons, John Mahoon, Lansbury James, Thomas Price, Jonathan Calloway, William Hassell, Simon T. Robason, Obed Bullock, Joel Smithwick, Timothy Brogden, Willis Overton, Josiah Rogerson, William Swain, James Howell, John W. Pulley, Benjamin Harrell, Jack Harrell.

A list of 53 names of Martin County men who served in the army during the War with Mexico, 1846-1848, has been obtained from several sources, including muster lists in the office of the state adjutant general. The list, believed to have included just about everyone from the county who served at that time, includes those on the muster roll of Company E, 1st N. C. Volunteers, a muster roll of volunteers as of June 16, 1846, a similar list as of December 26, 1846, a muster roster in Volume 12 in the office of the adjutant general, some from Jones' "Register of N. C. Troops," and three who served with Sgt. John C. Getsinger in Mexico, as listed by him in a letter to Elder C. B. Hassell in 1848.

The muster roll of Company E, 1st N. C. Volunteers, has the following men from Martin County: 1st Sgt. John C. Getsinger, Corporal Alfred Robertson, Musician Isaac N. Perry, Privates Gideon Barnhill, John Bland, William Griffin, Patrick Hardy, Wright Griffin, Dawson Harrison, George W. Holliday, Calvin Parker, Jacob D. Parker, Lincoln Perry, William R. Price, Perry Roberson, John Taylor, Stanley Vick, Jesse Whitley, Warren Williams.

The muster list of Martin County volunteers of June 16, 1846, follows: Sgt. Sylvanus Tombro, Corporal Symon Perry, Wiley Williams, Daniel Peal, Perry Lilly, Ebenezer Moore, Stephen Cralick, Levi Revels, John Sanderlin, Dennis Price, Tilman Ayers, William Tice, Daniel Lilly, Jr., John Lilly, Matthew Bland, Anthony Sellers, Noah Lilly, John R. Lanier, James Swain, James Harrell, Elijah Merit. Muster list of Martin County volunteers of December 26, 1846, follows: Hiliard Whitley, Dempsey D. Jones, William P. Hardy, William Wynn, John Blount, Jesse N. Perry, Calvin Buttery, Stanley

Buttery, and William Robertson. The name of Samuel Brewer, musician, originally appears on a muster roster in Volume 12 in the office of the adjutant general as a resident of Edgecombe County, but a notation written in later says it should be recorded that he was from Martin County. He was in Company A of the 1st N. C. Volunteers.

The three names furnished by 1st Sgt. John C. Getsinger not on other lists are James D. Gardner, Thomas Beach, and William Raynor. Sergeant Getsinger sent a list of 25 names as men who had served with him in Mexico to Elder C. B. Hassell in response to a request from the latter. This letter was not dated, but evidently was written shortly after Getsinger's return to the county after being mustered out July 28, 1848. He had served as first sergeant of Company E, 1st N. C. Volunteers, of which most of the men from Martin County were members. The company commander was Capt. William S. Duggan of Edgecombe County.

That Elder Hassell was interested in the men from this county who volunteered for the Mexican War is reflected in several passages about them in his biography, material for which is now in the library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Under date of January 20, 1847, he wrote: " A portion of the volunteers for Mexico assembled in the courthouse to adopt measures preparatory to leaving immediately for Wilmington, where the regiments from this State are to rendezvous. Improper measures were adopted on the part of some, and out of the 27 who had previously agreed to go, half that number in all probability will not get off." The elder had attended the meeting to aid with money and his advice, but evidently became disillusioned at the actions taken,, and concluded "but seeing the course pursued, left them to their own deliberations and that of some indiscreet friends."

The following day, January 21, 1847, his entry reads: "A better feeling among the volunteers today. Twenty-two agree to start for Wilmington, are supplied with money and other necessaries sufficient to last them to Wilmington and to spare. Some of the citizens accompanied them about two miles out of town.... Seeing these leave, others caught their spirit and they began to get up another company with such zeal that 16 had signed the pledge before night." The list he appended was about the same as that furnished by Sergeant Getsinger, so some of the latter who decided to volunteer possibly failed to honor their pledges.

Judge Asa Biggs' history reports that seven of the volunteers died while in the service, whether from wounds received in action or disease is not known, but probably the latter, since that is the only type of fatality mentioned in Sergeant Getsinger's letter. The seven, all privates, and the places of their deaths, were:

Gideon Barnhill died in a hospital at Matamoros, Mexoc, March 21, 1847; Patrick Hardy died in camp near Camargo, Mexico, April 27, 1847; William Griffin died in a hospital at Monterey, Mexico, on July 5, 1847; Wright Griffin died in camp at Buena Vista, Mexico, on July 6, 1847; and two died in the hospital at Saltillo, Mexico; Warren Williams on February 13, 1848, and Willie Williams on March 25, 1848.

Judge Biggs' report also shows that three of the men were discharged in Mexico during 1847, possibly due to illness or because their enlistment terms had expired, although no reason is assigned. They were Isaac N. Perry, a musician, who was discharged at Camargo on April 26, 1847, and Jesse Whitley and Calvin Parker, discharged at Matamoros on May 15, 1847. The remaining members of the Martin contingent of volunteers returned from Mexico and were discharged from the service at Fortress Monroe, Va., on July 28, 1848.

Elder Hassell has a note in his diary under date of July 21, 1847, about visiting one of the men who had been discharged from the service in Mexico as follows: "Then called to see Calvin Parker, a poor invalid just returned from the Mexican War. He was very much diseased and looked like he could not live."

After the county's veterans of the War with Mexico had returned, a public dinner was arranged in Williamston to welcome them home. More people attended than was expected, and the food evidently ran out, as Elder Hassell has the following entry in his diary, dated August 11, 1848, about the occasion: "Sundry citizens gave to the returned volunteers a dinner in the academy grove this day. About eleven volunteers attended and about six hundred people besides. The dinner was rather insufficient for them, as it was not expected so many would attend. Col. Asa Biggs addressed them and John C. Getsinger, one of their number, then read a short address in reply. Elder Carson addressed a throne of grace. There was no liquors furnished by the committee on arrangements and all passed off quietly."

Among the effects of Sergeant Getsinger, following his death in 1891, was found the following, which is probably the text of his response to the address of welcome made by Col. Asa Biggs at the public dinner on that occasion: "The Volunteers are highly gratified at the kind and cordial welcome which they have received from their Fellow Citizens. 'They return their acknowledgements for the enthusiastic greeting which they have received. Our perils and suffering have been great. We voluntarily assumed them at the call of our country. A portion of our little band have fallen victims to disease. We drop the sympathetic tear over their graves. We're compensated for all of our privations in the approving of our countrymen. We will endeavor to set such examples as will be worthy of imitation, and transmit to our posterity the blessing of republican liberty."

Following the war, Sergeant Getsinger returned to his family and farm in Williams Township, later purchasing a tract of land in Griffins Township, where he lived until his death in 1891 at the age of 79. In the early days of the Civil War, he was commissioned a captain and served in the 10th Regiment, 3rd Brigade, N. C. Militia.

This briefly summarizes some phases of the early history of Martin County from its formation in 1774 through the early part of the nineteenth century, when a new phase of its development began. Prior to the middle 1800's, its people were chiefly concerned with wresting their homes from the wilderness, developing a solidly established form of self-government which would provide a measure of political and religious freedom as well as mutual protection. The economy was advancing from that of the "tar, pitch and turpentine" era to one that was thought to be more stable, based principally on agriculture and a limited amount of industry, the latter at first comprised chiefly of the manufacture of lumber, shingles, and other wood products. As time went on, more and more settlers moved into the county, and its people began concerning themselves with the establishment of churches and schools, building better roads and improving other means of communication, as well as broadening the bases for agriculture, commerce and industry, all factors which materially contributed to an improved cultural environment for their descendants.

CHAPTER II

EARLY HISTORY

The earliest recorded mention of the area which was later to become Martin County, North Carolina, is contained in the journal of an exploratory trip made up Roanoke River in 1585 by Ralph Lane, governor of the first group from England to attempt a permanent settlement on Roanoke Island, then called Virginia. Sir Walter Raleigh had sponsored the expedition, appointing Lane governor of the 108 colonists who landed on July 26, 1585, and began to build and fortify a town on the northern part of Roanoke Island, which was to be called the "City of Raleigh."

Lane was seeking gold when he came up the Roanoke, at that time known to Indians who inhabited the section as the Moratock River. His imagination had been fired by stories told by the Indians of much gold and precious jewels to be found at the head waters of the river, which was reported to gush forth in a rushing stream near a great ocean lying to the west.

Lane and the group of forty men who accompanied him, after hearing the Indian tales, boarded two double wherries, manned by cars, and set out to ascend the swift and treacherous current of the rivers. C. H. Wiley, in his "North Carolina Reader," No. III, published in 1857, has the following to say about the ill-fated venture: "Lane and his men, sharing the infatuation of all the first pilgrims to these shores, persevered in their vain pursuit of gold; nor did they return until hunger compelled them to eat the last dog that bore them company. How far they ascended in this singular adventure cannot now be certainly known; it is probable, however, that this exploring expedition to the southern seas did not, after great fatigue and hardships, get higher than the present site of Williamston, in Martin County."

Lane and his group of 108 settlers had been brought to the New World in ships commanded by Raleigh's cousin, Admiral Sir Richard Granville. The admiral had started exploration of the area from Roanoke Island while the colonists were building the "City of Raleigh." Late in August, 1585, Sir Richard, promising to return in the spring, left for England, and Governor Lane and some of his company, in their search for gold, began exploring the rivers and streams emptying into Albemarle Sound.

Up to this time, many of the Indians who inhabited the Carolina region had been friendly. However, there were some—including one originally called "Wingina," who later had assumed the name of Pemisapan—that distrusted the English and there were a number of untoward events on both sides which contributed to mutual suspicion. Governor Lane heard rumors of an impending attack on the Roanokd Island settlement and invited Pemisapan, suspected leader of the plotters, and some of his men to come to the settlement for a feast on June 1, 1586. They accepted the invitation and the leader and eight of his head-men were put to death.

About a week later, on June 8, 1586, Sir Francis Drake and a large fleet, on their way home from the West Indies, came to anchor outside of Roanoke Inlet. He agreed to leave some supplies as well as a bark of some 70 tons and several smaller boats, along with two experienced sea captains, to conduct further explorations. However, a great storm arose on the 13th and continued through the 16th, and Lane's company, disappointed at finding no gold and apprehensive of further trouble with the Indians, expressed a desire to return to England.

Drake was consulted and agreed to take the entire group aboard his ships for the trip back home, sailing June 19th and arriving in Portsmouth, England, on July 20th. Their departure occurred only a few weeks before Sir Richard Granville, with well-furnished ships and stores for the colonists, appeared off the coast and found the Roanoke Island settlement deserted. Unwilling for England to completely lose possession of the country, Granville left a garrison of 15 men on the island before he also returned to England.

Sir Walter Raleigh next, at his own expense, organized another expedition in 1587, headed by Governor John White, to attempt another permanent settlement, but this time they were directed to stop briefly at Roanoke Island and then go on to the region at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, which had been explored the year before by Governor Lane. In July they arrived off the coast from Roanoke Island and began a search for the garrison left by Admiral Granville. They found the houses deserted and overgrown with weeds and vines; human bones lay bleaching in the fields, and the fort was falling into ruins. Their Spanish pilot, Fernando, proved treacherous and refused further to explore the coast in a search for the Chesapeake Bay region, where they were supposed to start a settlement, compelling Governor White and his colonists to remain on Roanoke Island.

This set the stage for the famous "Lost Colony," about which so much has been written and so little learned after Governor White left it to return to England in August, 1587, for additional supplies, farming implements and more people for the settlement. He was unable to return for three years because of England's war with Spain, which culminated in destruction of the Spanish Armada, and when he came back to the New World in 1590 the only sign of the colony to be found was the word "Croatan" carved on a tree.

Following the complete failure of attempts to colonize the Roanoke Island area, nearly half a century was to elapse before white men would again try to settle in the region that was to become the eastern North Carolina of today. And after Governor Lane and his party turned back from their exploratory trip up the Roanoke about where Martin County is now located, it was also to be upwards of half a century before white men again were to set foot in this section.

It may be noted that the first English colony was planted in what was called "Virginia," and this has led to considerable confusion and errors. The name was not originally given to any specific state or province; it was more or less a general term, used to designate English possessions in America. For one thing, the Pilgrims located in what they called "Northern Virginia," and almost all of the original settlements by the English were called by that name.

A French expedition landed at the mouth of Broad River in what is now South Carolina in 1562 and built a fort, which was called Carolina, in honor of Charles the Ninth of France. This followed the discovery by Ponce de Leon, the Spanish adventurer, on Easter Sunday, 1512, of land which he called Florida, in honor of the day and the multitude of flowers which he found. These names were applied to all the lands which these nations claimed on the North American continent, and in many cases the territory claimed by each overlapped that of the others.

Thus the origin of names applied to lands of what is now the eastern United States. Virginia is English, Carolina is both French and English, and Florida is Spanish. The French and English still applies to what is now North and South Carolina; and the colony of Raleigh, Roanoke Island and Roanoke or Morattock River, with all their historical and traditional associations, belong exclusively to North Carolina.

Settlers began drifting into the Albemarle section of North Carolina not too many years after Captain John Smith and his company started the Jamestown colony in the Hampton Roads area in 1607. The name of "Virginia," which previously had designated all the territory claimed by England through the discoveries of Raleigh's expeditions, was then confined to the colony on the James River.

In 1630, in the fifth year of his reign, Charles II of England granted to his attorney general, Sir Robert Heath, a patent for all that part of America between 31 and 36 degrees north latitude, the longitude being from the Atlantic Ocean to the South Seas or Pacific Ocean. This province was designated Carolina, in compliment to the British monarch. Heath retained title to it for only 18 years, conveying it in 1648 to Lord Multravers, Earl of Arundel and Surry, according to the historian C. H. Wiley.

Lord Multravers failed to take steps to colonize the territory, and a charter was granted in March, 1663, to eight "Lords Proprietors," namely: George, Duke of Albemarle; Edward, Earl of Clarendon; William, Earl of Craven; John, Lord Berkeley; Anthony, Lord Ashley; Sir George Carteret; Sir John Colleton; and Sir William Berkeley. A second charter was granted to the same group of noblemen in 1665, enlarging the boundaries of the original grant to include everything between 29 and 36½ degrees of north latitude, extending westward to the South Seas or Pacific. The second charter also included a provision for a degree of religious freedom not contained in the first charter, and this was to become one of the principal reasons for immigration to the Albemarle section from the provinces to the north where religious intolerance prevailed.

Sir William Berkley had been governor of Virginia for a number of years before he became part owner of Carolina as one of the eight Lords Proprietors. He was also the only one of the eight who actually lived in the new country, and as a governor he was harsh, arbitrary, and intolerant to the extreme. He also levied tithes or taxes which many of the colonists considered unreasonable; and this, too, contributed to the migration to the region around Albemarle Sound, where the settlers hoped to escape from despotic subjugation.

It was for these reasons that Roger Green, a clergyman, in 1653, led a colony to the banks of the Chowan and Roanoke Rivers, but even prior to this, there were some scattered settlers over much of the region north of the Albemarle Sound about whom there are no reliable accounts. There were no towns or villages in the new province; no churches, courthouses, or public schools were to be found. However, the people who were coming to this section preferred to undergo danger from the Indians and the privations of lonely homes in the forests to the persecution which they found not only in England but also in most portions of America at that time.

An example of Governor Berkeley's ruthless cruelties is to be seen in the case of William Drummond, who was appointed in 1663 by Berkeley to be the first "Governor of Albemarle." A native of Scotland who settled in Virginia, he was reported to have earned the respect and confidence of, and given satisfaction to, the people whom he governed in North Carolina. These colonists had been previously uncontrolled by law or magistrate and, after three years, he returned to Virginia. Accused of supporting "Bacon's Rebellion," which occurred in Virginia about that time, he was arrested and, without a trial, was executed two hours later on Berkeley's orders.

John W. Moore, in his "School History of North Carolina," published in 1886, had the following to say about the character of those who were moving into North Carolina during this period: "It can hardly be realized amid the present luxuries and enjoyments of the American people what dangers and privations were encountered by the white settlers in North Carolina two hundred years ago; for while now thronging cities, teeming fields, and busy highways of a people numbering many millions cover the land, then cruel and crafty Indians, always hostile at heart to the tread of the white man, surrounded the defenseless homes of the scattered colonists and filled the great forest stretching three thousand miles toward the setting sun."

It was about this time that people first began moving into what was to become Martin County. It is claimed that a few came here between 1660 and 1675, but their names are not known, and no official records can be found to substantiate the claim. The county was not chartered until about a hundred years later, in 1774, and prior to that whatever official records about its inhabitants still exist are scattered among nearly a half dozen counties dating back to colonial days.

Martin County's territory was first included in Albemarle Province, which embraced all the area presently included in North and part of South Carolina and extending to the Pacific Ocean to the west. Some information about early residents of this section are to be found in official records of the counties of Chowan, Bertie, Tyrrell, Edgecombe, and Halifax, of which at one time or another Martin County was a part, and all of which were originally in the Albemarle territory.

In or about 1622 Edward Bland, a Virginia merchant, led an exploring and trading expedition among the Indians who lived along the Chowan, Meherrin and Roanoke Rivers. Soon thereafter, according to Corbitt's "Formation of North Carolina Counties," Roger Green, a Nansemond County, Virginia, clergyman who was to lead a colony to the section, started exploration of the territory south of Chowan

River. He reported that timber of all kinds grew abundantly, that there were large quantities of fish and game, pipes had been seen tipped with silver, the Indians wore copper plates about their necks, and there was very little winter or cold weather in the section.

In 1657, Nathaniel Batts, earliest known settler in the area, was reported to have had land between the mouth of Roanoke River and Salmon Creek, although it is not known when he came into the section. Green and his group are said to have settled in the region in 1653. Later, in 1707, Robert Lawrence testified that in 1660-61 he "seated and occupied for seven years a plantation on the southwest side of Chowan River three or four miles from the mouth of Moratock." Practically all of this took place in Bertie County, although it is probable some settled just across Moratock River in what is now Martin County.

Around the beginning of the eighteenth century, people began moving in greater numbers into the territory which was later to become Martin County. It is said that Hugh Smithwick came into the area and settled in old Albemarle County about 1643, but very little can be learned about him or his activities.

The first official records of the Smithwicks are to be found in colonial records of Chowan Precinct, now in the courthouse at Edenton. Edward Smithwick bought land from George Slade and wife, Mary, in 1701, apparently in what is now Bertie County. Also in Chowan Precinct records is a deed for some land from Edward Smithwick to his son, John, in 1715, but the location is not definite. In the same year, Edward Smithwick made a gift of 800 acres to his son, John, one of the boundaries of which extended to the mouth of Charleton Creek on the north side of Roanoke River in Bertie.

The first evidence of a Smithwick in Martin County is to be found in Bertie Precinct records. On November 7, 1724, Edmund Smithwick sold to John Smithwick, for 50 pounds, 250 acres on Smithwick Creek. Witnesses were Nathaniel Ming and William Lattemore, and the deed was endorsed by John Sutton, deputy clerk of court for Bertie Precinct or County. Also in the following year Edmund Smithwick deeded to John Smithwick an additional 200 acres of land on the south side of Moratock River and on the lower side of Smithwick Creek. The name Smithwick being applied to that creek would indicate that some of the family had been in the area prior to that time.

There are wide variations in spelling in the early records, especially in the proper names of people and places. Edmund also appears as Edmond and could be the same or different persons. There are almost as many different spellings of Moratock as there are deeds and other records referring to that river. Among others, it appears as Marratuck, Morratock, Morattock, Morrotack, Morattuckt, Morratachy, Mooratacky, Marratach, Morraticky, Roanoaky, and there is one reference to a "Shojottack," which may very well have been the same stream. Later on, the same wide variations apply to "Skewarky," which is spelled in numerous ways.

That Morratock or Roanoke River had still another name, "Abihonntak," is indicated in early deeds defintely identifying Martin County soil, although there is some confusion about their recording in different counties. Dated September 3, 1735, and recorded in Tyrrell County records, Book 1, page 51, there is a transaction in which John Stancill sold to James Swain 100 acres of land "on the south side of Morratock River, commonly known as Abihonntak, beginning at a marked gum on Devil's Gut." The same tract (now the Barber-Griffin lands) was sold back to John Stancill by James Swain on May 22, 1773, according to a deed recorded in Bertie Precinct records, Windsor, Book A, page 307. Since Bertie Precinct was established in 1722 from Chowan, and Tyrrell was established in 1729 from Chowan, Bertie, Currituck and Pasquotank, it is confusing that the two deeds are recorded in different counties, although both were in existence when the transactions took place.

Members of the Smithwick family evidently operated in several counties as realtors. On February 12, 1723, Edmund Smithwick sold some land on the south side of Casia (Cashie) River to John Griffin, son of Marvin Griffin and wife, Elizabeth. Then, on January 12, 1726, Samuel Smithwick deeded 520 acres of land on Long Ridge Road (now in Washington County) to Edmond Smithwick. Bertie records show that on May 5, 1729, Edmond Smithwick deeded 100 acres of land on the south side of Moratock River, "Back of swamp on Devil's Gut," to William Robinson and wife, Mary. Mary was the daughter of William Smithwick, and she and her husband were living there in 1729. At their death, the land went to William Robinson, Jr.

Among the earliest of Bertie County deeds for land in this county is a deed of August 15, 1722, for 250 acres from George Smith to Henry Pope. It was stated that the consideration of 60 pounds was one-half of the money paid by the latter's father, William Pope, of Isle of Wight, Va., to George Smith on December 3, 1720, for one half of the patent of 500 acres. The location was "on the south side of Morratacky (Roanoke River) adjoining Thomas Goodwin, also Crawford, John Pope." It was witnessed by John Bryan, John Griffin, and Thomas Boone.

Other early deeds to Martin County lands, with the names of principals and witnesses, in chronological order, follow: February 19, 1723, John Bryan sold 450 acres on the south side of Morattock adjoining John Hamilton to Nicholas Smith for 30 pounds. May 10, 1723, William Green and wife, Elizabeth, sold 100 acres in Society Parish on the south side of Merratach River to John Gray. The consideration was 10 pounds, and the deed was witnessed by Lewis Bryan, Jearnes Brogden and Thomas Beckman.

Six deeds were recorded on May 13, 1723. Barrebe Milton (Melton) paid 10 pounds to John Cotton and wife, Judith, for 130 acres on the south side of Morratacky River, adjoining William Green Island Creek. James Brohedon and John Melton were witnesses. Evidently the same Barreby Milton or Melton was involved in two other transactions on the same day, although his name is spelled differently each time. It is recorded that Barrabee Melton, for 10 pounds, sold 140 acres on the south side of Mooratachy River on Island Swamp, Reedy Branch, adjoining John Rivers, to William Hollingsworth (Hillingsworth). Witnesses were John Leonard and George Smith. Then Barrybe Melton sold to John Rivers, for 3 pounds, 100 acres on the south side of Morattacky River to William Hollingsworth.

William Green and his wife, Elizabeth, were grantors in the other three deeds dated May 13, 1723, although one of them does not show the name of the person who bought the land. It shows that Green and his wife sold 40 acres on the south side of Morratacky River and Reedy Branch for six pounds, with James Brokedon and John Melton as witnesses. They sold 100 acres on the south side of Morratachy River at Island Creek for 10 pounds, with James Brohdon and Barrabee Melton as witnesses; and 100 acres on the south side of Morratacky River for 10 pounds to James Smith, with James Brohdon and John Melton as witnesses.

Six more land sales in Martin County are recorded in the Bertie County records during 1723. William Lattemore, by virtue of power of attorney, acknowledged the sale of 100 acres on the south side of Morattuckt River and known as "Abihonntah" on Devil's Gut from James Swain to John Stancell on May 22, 1723. The consideration was 5 pounds and witnesses were Henry Seppler and Peter Stancell. Foster Mason, on August 13, 1723, sold 160 acres on the south side of Morrattacky River to Ralph Mason, Jr., for 10 pounds. Ralph Mason, Sr., and Thomas Browne were witnesses. Another sale by Ralph Mason, Jr., was made to Ralph Mason, Sr., the preceding day, August 12, 1723, of 150 acres on the south side of Morrattacky River adjoining Foster Mason and Thomas Browne.

John Brown and wife, Mary, sold 80 acres of the south side of Morrattacky River, adjoining William Brown, deceased, to Joseph Joyner on October 25, 1723, for 10 pounds. The land was said to be part of a patent for 640 acres issued to William Brown and resurveyed by John Brown. Witnesses were Bar. Mackinnie and Nathaniel Holley.

On November 10, 1723, Nathaniel Meriot sold 50 acres on the south side of Roanoaky River on Plumtree Island, adjoining Robert Long, Joseph Sewards, Francis Varnums (?) and William Reeves, to Joseph Ballard of Nansemond County, Va., for 10 pounds. John Grey, William Gray and Thomas Whittmell were witnesses. John Stewart paid 10 pounds on November 12, 1723, for land on the south side of Morrattacky River on "Flaggy Run," described as "by patent dated March 13, 1724, adj. Robert West." Needham Bryant and John Page were witnesses.

The Smithwicks come back into the picture on February 23, 1724. Henry Speller, by virtue of a power of attorney from John Smithwick, acknowledged in open court the deeding of 365 acres on Shojottack (Moratock), adjoining James Williamson, to John Johnson. Witnesses were James Williamson and Edmund Smithwick. John Wood and wife, Jane, issued a deed on April 6, 1724, "to my loving brother," Benjamin Wood, for 320 acres on the south side of Morratticky River on Clayhill. Witnesses were Richard Myrick, William Merritt and John Spier.

Arthur Davis and wife, Elizabeth, sold 200 acres on the south side of Morrattucky River, adjoining John Hamilton, to Richard Killingsworth on August 3, 1724, for 7 pounds. John Bryan and William Binum (Bynum) were witnesses. The following day, the same couple sold to William Killingsworth, for 7 pounds, 150 acres on the south side of Morrattuck River, adjoining Richard Killingsworth.

Peter Stansell sold to Arthur Dugall 150 acres on the south side of Morratucky River and the east side of Smithwick Creek for 10 pounds on August 11, 1724. The land was part of a 300-acre patent issued to Stansell on April 1, 1723. James Castellow, Owen O'Daniel and Jonathan Ridings were witnesses. Another 1724 sale, on October 12, was made by Arthur Dugall to John Stansell for 150 acres on the south side of Morratucky River and on the east side of Smithwick Creek, the consideration being 17 pounds. It was said to be "part of the tract bought of Peter Stansell," and the witnesses were John Smithwick and Peter Stansell.

The final two sales in 1724 of Martin County land recorded in Bertie records came on October 14, when Peter Stansell deeded to John Stansell 150 acres on the south side of Morattucky River for 17 pounds; and on November 9, when Benjamin Foreman sold 150 acres on the south side of Morattucky River on a meadow to John Hall, no consideration mentioned. John Macrakey and Jonathan Ridings witnessed the first sale, while no witnesses were recorded for the second.

Two sales are recorded in 1725. John Cotton and wife, Judith, sold 50 acres on the south side of Morratuck River, adjoining John Green and William Green, for 5 pounds. John Kelly was the witness. Henry Speller, for 60 pounds, sold 250 acres on Smithwick Creek, adjoining Richard Swain and Edmond Smithwick, to John Duggan, on August 9, 1725. Witnesses were Wm. Charlton and William Charlton, Jr.

Taken from colonial records of Bertie and Tyrrell Precincts, the following transactions show names of early settlers on lands that were later to become Martin County:

October 22, 1741: "Robert Lanier, in consideration of natural love and good will and affection which I have and bear to my well beloved grandson, Robert Lanier Daniel, do absolutely give and bequeath unto Robert Lanier Daniel a certain grant of land, containing by estimation 83 acres, more or less, being in Tyrrell County on the east side of Smithwick Creek. Beginning at a syprus (sic) on said creek at the mouth of Inteadem Mill Branch and up the said branch to a dividing line tree, a pine, and up the old line and making a corner down the old line to the first station." Witnesses were Thomas Duggone and John Lanier.

Sept. 3, 1742: Osborne Jeffreys to Warren Andrews, for 10 pounds, 200 acres south side of Conoho Creek, lower part of 640 acres, adjoining John McDonald line at Narrows Branch.

December 4, 1742: William Kennedy of Tyrrell County, for 200 pounds, sold to Francis Roberson 320 acres on north side of mouth prong of Flat Swamp. John Anderson, Francis Kennedy and Edward Ward, witnesses.

September 18, 1744: "John, Earl of Granville, Viscount Carteret and Baron Carteret of Hawns (?) in the county of Bedford in the Kingdom of Great Britain, Lord President of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, granted Edmund Smithwick for 10 shillings sterling 250 acres of vacant land in the Parish of St. Andrews on west side of Smithwick Creek and along Ward's and Speller's line and Stansell's line. Signed Granville, by Thos. Child." Rent was 3 shillings yearly for every 100 acres of land.

March 3, 1753: Earl of Granville (John Carteret) to Edmund Smithwick, 300 acres in Parish of St. Andrews, beginning on south side of the Fork Swamp, to Bevior (Beaver) and on along the Redy (Reedy) Pocosin. Signed, Granville, by James Jones and Francis Coburn.

June, 1753: James Graves and his wife, Christian, sold to Thomas Yarrell for 46 pounds, current money of Virginia, 200 acres of land on south side of Conoho Creek, beginning at William Hambleton's and up Indian Branch. Deed signed and delivered at June court, 1753, and witnessed by Samuel Wheatley, Phillip Williams and John Butler, justices of the peace for Tyrrell County.

August 31, 1753: William Ward to Edmond Smithwick, no consideration mentioned, 150 acres on west side of Smithwick Creek, "beginning at the mouth of a branch at a cypress and thence by a line of marked trees to center of three pines, called Spelor's (Speller's) and Ward's corner and thence by a westward line of marked trees, thence west side of the mouth of Spelor (Speller) Beaver Dam and thence up Smithwick Creek." Witnesses were E. Smithwick and John Smithwick (sons of Edmond Smithwick).

January 29, 1755: John Cherry to Joseph Biggs, for 18 pounds Virginia money, 320 acres, "being land granted by Earl of Granwall (Granville) on February 1, 1725, to William Mizelle and conveyed by deed to John Holland, by deed from John Spear to John Cherry." Boundaries were listed at follows: "West side Tish Creek formerly called Bertie County; line of Cherry and Ward, formerly called Speller's line, to a hickory tree, thence east to a cypress tree at first station."

November 7, 1755: Joseph Daniel of Edgecombe County sold, for 10 pounds current money of Virginia, to Robert Daniel 100 acres in Tyrrell County in the fork of Smithwick Creek known by the name of Poplar Neck, being part of a tract of land that Robert Daniel was living on at the time. Witnesses were Samuel Burrance, Henry Roberson and Hardy Daniel.

February 24, 1757: Thomas Yarrell, for 40 pounds current money of Virginia, bought 240 acres "butted and bounded on south side of Little Conoho Creek, beginning at the mouth of Indian Branch and running up branch to a cypress, thence along a line of marked trees and various courses, thence along Indian Branch to the first station.

February 4, 1758: Thomas Yarrell bought from John Butler, for 10 pounds, 150 acres described as "the plantation James Bowen formerly on." The deed was witnessed by James Gainor and Thomas Avis.

February 13, 1758: John Ballard, for 80 pounds, sold 150 acres, including the plantation where he was then living, and 200 acres on the south side of Conoho Creek to Warren Andrews. The boundaries are supported by John Edward's deed bearing date of October 16, 1749.

A grant from the Earl of Granville to John Spier, dated September 17, 1758, calls for 525 acres, bounded as follows: "South side of Morattock River, beginning at a maple at the mouth of Squowacy (Skewarkey) Creek or Gut and running thence along river north 25 degrees west 32 poles, thence north 48 E. 160 poles, thence along the river still north 23 west 40 poles, thence north 46 west 72 poles to a hickory on the river bank, a corner tree on Robert Lovick's, thence south along Lovick's course of bounds 108 poles to a cypress in edge of the swamp, thence along the said swamp, James Beach's bounds, north 85, 190 poles to a white oak at the corner in the south, south 23 degrees west along the said swamp, the said Beach's bounds, 108 poles to a cypress in a swamp, Whittley's corner, thence south 60 degrees west along said Whittley's line and courses 250 poles to a pine at edge, to be his corner at a branch, James Beach's bounds of his other land, hence along said bounds south 25 degrees east 72 poles to a persimmon tree on the edge of Squowacy (Skewarkey), thence along said creek or gut to the first station. Jno. Haywood, Jno. Holland."

March 13, 1758: One hundred barrels of pitch was the consideration in a deed for 99 acres of land on the north prong of Tranters Creek made by John Stansell of Tyrrell County to Jesse Sparkman and witnessed by Edward Ward.

May 31, 1759: Richard Hardison conveyed to John Daly, for 100 pounds of proclamation money, 100 acres comprising "all that plantation" on which Hardison then resided. It was located on the south side of Roanoke River and bounded on the southwest by the river, on the south by Rose's land, then owned by Daly, on the north by Cheat Neck Branch, and on the east by the land of William Carkie (?). Witnesses were William Karkee (?) and John Hardison.

In a deed dated February 15, 1760, but not registered in Tyrrell County until July 5, 1761, John Cherry sold 133 acres to Joseph Biggs, the description, reading "Thomas Eastwood line, Back Swamp, 1758."

February 25, 1760: "I, William Ross, Sr., planter, and wife, Elizabeth, for sum of 30 pounds proclamation money paid by William Ross, Jr. Bounded and joining the lands of Peter Stansill, John Gardner and Smithwick, John Dugen's (?) line to Jno. Ross corner. Containing by estimation 50 acres, more or less. Including my house and plantation where William Ross, Jr., now lives." It was attested by Edward Smithwick, Esq., justice of the peace, September, 1760.

Located about three miles southeast of Robersonville, on the north side of Flat Swamp, lies a tract of land that was granted to Warren

Andrews on March 29, 1760, by John Carteret, Earl of Granville. The size is not known, but the annual quit-rent for the property was declared to be 4 shillings, 2 pence and a half penny. The grant was made under the seal of Thomas Child as attorney and commissioner for Granville. In 1963 the land was owned by Johnnie V. Andrews and Mrs. Staton Williams,, great-great-great grandchildren of Warren Andrews. The original grant was in possession of Mrs. H. H. Pope of Robersonville, who inherited it from her father, Dr. R. H. Hargrove.

February 7, 1761: Josiah Hendrick of Edgecombe County, for 30 pounds, deeded to James Mizell 125 acres on the east side of Smithwick's Creek, lying on Speller's Branch, and from there by agreed line between Josiah Hendrick and William Bennett to the John Little line. Witnesses were John Mizell and Edmondson Edward Smithwick.

Following is the description of a land grant for 530 acres to Robert Daniel, dated February 16, 1761, registered in the office of the Secretary of State, Raleigh; "Description for 530 acres of land in Tyrrell (Martin) County on the fork of Smitheoycks (Smithwick's) Creek: Beginning at a sweet gum on the head of said fork; thence N. 45 west 160 poles to a pine, thence S. 80 W. 160 poles to Dokes Branch, thence N. 45 W. on the said branch, MCKistub's line, 220 poles to James (Jos.) Swain's line, thence N. 256 E. on the Swain's line 60 poles to a holly on the Root Branch, Chas. Manning's line, thence S. 75 E. upon Manning's line 30 poles, thence N. 30 E. on the said line 160 poles to the said Manning's corner tree, thence S. 30 W. the general courses of the Beaver Dam 320 poles to the first station." A report on the grant was addressed to John Wiggins Manning, Dymond City, N.C., by the Secretary of State on October 15, 1888.

August 22, 1761: Elias Leggett sold to Hugh Ross 365 acres "on the north side of Flat Swamp, along Martin Cremoner's line, formerly conveyed to Richard Sparkman. Ross to pay quit-rents on 165 acres from 1741." Witnesses were John Ross, James Leggett and William Ross.

March 2, 1762: John Mizell, for 10 pounds, deeded to Mark Mizell 350 acres on the north side of Deep Run Swamp, adjacent to the lands of James Leggett, John Harrison and (?) Culling, Esq., including the plantation and land belonging to William Mizell and where he lately lived.

November 9, 1762, John Carteret, the Earl of Granville, granted to Edmund Smithwick 540 acres in the Parish of St. Andrews (?), beginning on the east of Smithwick's Beaver Dam, to John Lanier's, to Lightwood Log Branch. Smithwick to pay the yearly rent of 25 shillings, seven pence and half penny, which is at the rate of 3 shillings sterling or four shillings proclamation money, to Granville. The grant was signed "Granville, by Francis Corbin." Witnesses were James Turnbull and James Campbell.

September 15, 1763: John Griffin of Beaufort County gave his son, William Griffin of Tyrrell County 150 acres of land on the south side of Keepers Branch, the son to pay the lord proprietors' yearly rent of two shillings for every 100 acres. The deed was witnessed by William Ross, Martin Griffin and Ann (?) Cook.

October 20, 1763: Francis Hobson, Sr., of Burtee (Bertie) County gave to his cousin, Francis Hobson, Jr., of Pitt County, 640 acres of land in Tyrrell County on Flat Swamp, the place called Hobson's——— (unintelligible); also his copper still and worm, 10 cows and calves, 10 sows and pigs, two slaves. The elder Hobson reserved a life estate in the property, however. Witnesses were Nathan Mayo, William Kelly and Mary (?) Showers.

January 9, 1764: John Bennett deeded to John Ross, planter, 145 acres of land described as follows: "Beginning at center of three pines on west side of Mulberry Branch near the head, along Mizell's old back line, to small pond near a sandy ridge, thence by a line to a small savannah to a corner tree, east side of Mulberry Pond, thence along Gardner's line to first station."

September 28, 1765: Thomas Roberson of Southampton County, Va., planter, deeded to William Griffin for 20 pounds proclamation money 100 acres on the east side of Smithwick Creek adjoining William Gardner and Henry Roberson. Witnesses were Char. Hodgson, Martin Griffin, and Henry Robes (Roberson).

November 18, 1766: James Cooper deeded for 50 pounds 450 acres to Edward Cooper, Thomas Gardner, and William Griffin land on the west side of Poplar Branch and Deep Run. Although there undoubtedly were others, this is the first record of a partnership buying land in this section.

May 14, 1767: Edmondson Samuel Smithwick deeded to William Griffin for 20 pounds 100 acres of land lying on the east side of Smithwick Creek, bounded as specified in a deed issued by Charles Hardison to Mormedich (?) Roberson. Witnessed by Edward Smithwick and Martin Griffin.

Land ownership changed hands fairly often in this section, and some old deeds show that the Warren Neck farm or plantation, bordering the confluence of the Roanoke River and Welch's Creek which forms the northeastern point of Martin County, was one that moved from one hand to another with more or less regularity during the early history of the region. It forms the major portion of the lands upon which the Weyerhaeuser industrial complex is now (1974) located.

Comparatively recently, Hugh B. ("Cap") York found several deeds for the property, which at one time was owned by his maternal grandfather, George W. Blount, prominent Williamston merchant of the early 1900's. Earliest deed was one issued on February 19, 1773, by John "Powsm," attorney for William and John Duchenfield, to David Turner. Covering two tracts of land, containing 800 acres, it was filed in the courthouse for Tyrrell County and described the tracts as two patents granted to the Duchenfields, with Esquires Creek being mentioned as one of the boundaries.

Some 12 years later, on June 1, 1758, David Turner deeded the tract, then estimated at 898 acres, to William Hughten (Hooten). This deed is recorded in Martin County, Book A, page 549. Less than two years later, on March 19, 1787, William Hooten, Sr., deeded a parcel, containing 81 square poles, to Charles Hooten, deeded a parcel, containing 81 square poles, to Charles Hooten, registered in Book A, page 501. On the same date the senior Hooten deeded to Charles Hooten another portion of the Warren Neck tract. The latter deed is registered in Book A, page 493.

Henry Hooten, on July 30, 1795, sold part of his land to Ed (Edward) Yellowly. No price was mentioned, but one of the boundary lines touched a pine in Pungo Meadows.

No other changes in the property ownership are noted until December 16, 1824, when Ed Yellowly sold his land to David Clark. About 300 acres were involved in the transfer, the seller reserving one-half acre on Roanoke River.

About six years later, on November 23, 1831, Francis R. Ely bought some 300 acres of the Warren Neck tract at a sale conducted by Samuel S. Burroughs, sheriff, the land being on Roanoke River and Welches Creek, adjoining the lands of Thomas Armistead, David Clark's heirs, and others.

Next, Francis R. Ely sold two tracts of the Warren Neck land to Maitland and Armistead on December 10, 1836. The land was described as that purchased February 28, 1834, by Francis R. Ely from Joseph B. G. Roulhac. The second tract was that purchased by Ely from Gavin Hogg and William M. Clark, who were acting as executors of David Clark's estate, and it was described as being all the lands of David Clark in and near Warren Neck, including an island in Roanoke River.

Benjamin Maitland and Thomas S. Armistead sold three tracts of the Warren Neck land to Wilson Corprew on February 22, 1837. The Corprews were prominent in Martin County at that time, some of them later locating in Perquimans County.

Approximately a year later, on February 17, 1838, C. M. Clark sold 300 acres of the Warren Neck land to Francis R. Ely. The deed is recorded in Book L, page 269, Martin County registry. A little more than two years later, on July 17, 1840, Benjamin Maitland sold about 300 acres of the land to J. C. Pettyjohn, one tract being the land purchased by Francis R. Ely from Jos. B. G. Roulhac, the other being the tract purchased by Francis R. Ely from Gavin Hogg and William Clark, executors of David Clark's estate. The tract included the island in Roanoke River.

A few yeras later, in a deed dated November 11, 1844, some of the land was sold by Thomas S. Armistead to John C. Pettyjohn for division, Pettyjohn receiving, among other acreage, the island in Roanoke River known as the Duchenfield or Tallow Island. Ownership of the land then rocked along on an even keel for some eleven years until July 18, 1855, when Thomas S. Armistead sold 525 acres to J. C. Pettyjohn, the lands adjoining among others those of Stewart on the south and Edward Yellowly on the west and being commonly known as Warren Neck Plantation. The deed is recorded in Book "R", page 275. On the same day, John C. Pettyjohn sold 258 acres of the land to John Beasley. The deed is recorded in Book "R," page 276.

Almost four years later, on March 30, 1859, John Beasley sold 350 acres of the land to Goodman Darden, the tract being known at that time as the Lower Warren Neck Plantation. Hardly four years passed before Goodman Darden sold his 350 acres to James Overton on May 11, 1863.

Thus can be seen the development of the Martin County region from a wilderness inhabited solely by savages at the time of Governor Lane's exploratory trip up Roanoke River in 1585, through the scattering of settlers that came in during the following century, to its more complete development as a civilized region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

C. H. Wiley's 1857 "North Carolina Reader" has the following to say about the character of the population that moved into settle this country in its beginning: "In 1672, George Fox, the founder of the Quaker sect, crossed the Great Dismal Swamp, from Virginia, and found a rural and primitive race scattered among the woods, simple, virtuous, benevolent in reason and conduct, and inculcating and cherishing the most absolute freedom of conscience." The "Reader" also quotes the early historian Bancroft as tempted to exclaim, "North Carolina was settled by the freest of the free; by men to whom the restraints of other colonies were too severe."

CHAPTER III

GOVERNMENT

Organized government in what is now Martin County dates back to at least 1734 when Edward Smithwick was appointed to hold court in what was Tyrrell County at that time.

Smithwick was mentioned in 1678 in a land grant description, but the location is not definite. A grant of 280 acres was made to Robert Winley of the County of Albemarle, Shaftesbury Precinct. The land was bound on the southeast side of Matacomaugh Creek at an ash standing on a point by a branch side dividing the land from Edward Smithwick. The same Smithwick was appointed an attorney in 1705. Shaftesbury Precinct included several counties and Martin later became one of them. It is not certain if the Smithwicks had located in what is now Martin County prior to 1705. Edward could have been in Bertie or one of the other Shaftesbury Precinct counties.

Edmund Smithwick, apparently the son of Edward, was sheriff of Tyrrell, later Martin, during part of the year, 1747. In 1740 Edmund Smithwick was listed in Colonial Records as chairman of the committee of the entire House to debate several matters in the bill proposing, among other things, aid to His Majesty.

No mention of Martin County men serving in governmental posts has been found from 1747 until 1760 when Blake Baker of Halifax County but possibly a resident of what is now Martin, served in the Assembly. He was also listed as a member of the Assembly in 1762.

The next mention of a Martin County man in the Assembly was on October 23, 1769, when Ebenezer Slade was certified as an elected representative from Tyrrell County, now Martin. William Slade must have been a representative also, for he was named on October 26, 1769, to serve along with Ebenezer on a certain committee.

William Slade served in the Assembly in 1769-73 for Tyrrell County, now Martin. A member of the Assembly in 1771, William Slade along with Edmondson S. Smithwick introduced a bill to establish a county out of Halifax and Tyrrell counties.

On December 4, 1773, Thomas Hunter and Edward Smithwick were elected representatives for Tyrrell County—later Martin—to the Assembly.—Colonial Records, Vol. 9, page 734.

Old records show that John Stuart and Smithwick represented Martin County at the Assembly held in New Bern on March 2, 1774.

Edmond Edward Smithwick on August 26, 1774, appeared for Martin County in the first Provincial Congress at New Bern. He signed the commission "Edward Smithwick".—Colonial Records, Vol. 9, page 1042.

In the Journal of the proceedings of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, held at Hillsborough on August 20, 1775, the following delegates from Martin County were listed: Kenneth McKenzie, Whitmel Hill, John Everitt (Everett), William Slade, John Stuart and William Williams.

Edward Smihtwick was certified on April 4, 1776, as a duly elected representative for Martin County at the Provincial Congress held in Halifax at that time.—Colonial Records, Vol. 10, page 501.

Thomas Wiggins was certified on April 14, 1776, as a duly elected representative for Martin County to the Provincial Congress at Halifax.

The Journal of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, held at Halifax on November 12, 1776, shows that William Williams, Whitmill Hill, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison and Samuel Smithwick were certified to represent Martin County. Apparently only two reported for duty at the time. They were Williams and Hardison. Hunter, Hill and Samuel Smithwick apparently reported for duty on November 20, 1776.

The first North Carolina Constitution and Bill of Rights were adopted on December 18, 1776, apparently by the congress which assembled in Halifax on November 12, 1776.

The above records are based mainly on entries in the Colonial and State records. It was not until 1777 that the first names of state senators and county representatives were listed in the N. C. State manual. It is pointed out that some discrepancies appear in the Manual and other records.

The State Records, Vol. 13, page 532, show the following as recorded in the Senate Journal, North Carolina General Assembly, meeting in Halifax on January 19, 1779:

"The returning officer for the County of Martin certifies that Mr. Kenneth McKenzie was duly elected a member to represent said county in Senate, whereupon the said Kenneth McKenzie appeared, qualified agreeable to law and took his seat."

The North Carolina Manual for 1874 lists Whitmel Hill as the senator from Martin County in 1778 and 1779. The General Assembly met on January 19, 1779, in Halifax.

Samuel Smithwick and Samuel Williams served as members of the House when it met in Smithfield in May, 1779. On November 20, that year, Williams was one of fifteen House members to enter a protest against the treason and confiscation bill which were alleged to have been in conflict with each other and caused children, wives and aged parents of Tories who fled the state to suffer and become dependent on the charity of some future assembly. —State Records, Vol. XII, pages 991-92.

The 1874 manual lists the following senators from Martin County beginning in 1777 up to the present: William Williams, 1777; Whitmel Hill, 1778-1780 and 1784-1785.

The names of State senators from Martin County continue: Kenneth McKenzie, 1779 and 1781-1783; Nathan Mayo, 1786-1791; Ebenezer Slade, 1792-1796; William McKenzie, 1797-1800; John Hyman, 1801-1802 and 1804; Jeremiah Slade, 1803, 1806 and 1809-1815; John Stewart, 1805; James Burroughs, 1807-1808; Simmons J. Baker, 1816-1818; William Darlett, 1819; Llewellyn Bowers, 1820 and 1823; Samuel Hyman, 1821 1822; John A. Smithwick, 1824-1825; Jos. J. Williams, 1826-1830; Jesse Cooper, 1831 and 1834-1843; David Latham, 1832-1833;

In its December 29, 1833, the Tarborough "Free Press" carried the following item: "Mr. Jesse Cooper was elected Senator in Martin County to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of David Latham. The poll stood: for Cooper, 165, and for William R. Bennett, 153.

Asa Biggs, 1884-1845 and 1854-1855; Daniel Ward, 1846-1849 and 1852; W. R. W. Sherrod, 1850-1851; A. Chesson, 1856-1857; D. C. Gaither, 1858-1859; Jesse R. Stubbs, 1860-1861 and 1864-1865; James G. Calloway, 1862-1863; James Edwin Moore, 1866-1867; (The N. C. constitution (March 16, 1868) provided for the election of clerks of court, sheriffs, constables, members of the General Assembly, coroners; Franklin G. Martindale, 1868-1869; L. C. Latham, 1870-1871; J. B. Respass and H. E. Stilley, 1871.

There is a break in the record from 1872 to 1879. From 1879 to the present, the senators are listed as follows:

Joseph T. Waldo, 1879; Theodore W. Poole, 1883-1885; Harry W. Stubbs, 1889, 1905-1907, 1913-1915 and 1921-1923; T. E. McCaskey, 1895-1897; Clayton Moore, II, 1927; Elbert S. Peel, Sr., 1929-1931; Robert L. Coburn, 1935-1937; Hugh G. Horton, 1941-1943, 1947 and 1951-1953; Robert H. Cowen, 1957; Elbert S. Peel, Jr., 1959; Edgar J. Gurganus, 1963 and 1969. Martin County has been without a native son senator since 1969.

Although Martin County, then Tyrrell, was represented at least five years before Martin was erected as a separate entity in March, 1774. It was not until 1777 that the county was listed in the North Carolina manual.

Prior to its formation in 1774 and until the first legislative manual in 1777, Martin was represented in the assemblies and provincial congresses by the Slades, Smithwicks, Hills, Williamses, Hunters, Hardison, and Wigginses.

Names have various spellings and it cannot be determined, in all cases, who was who. For instance there are Edmundson Edward Smithwick, Edmond Smithwick, Edward Smithwick and others. It is likely that the given name, offered in various spellings, was the same for one Smithwick.

The North Carolina manual lists the following members of the North Carolina House of Representatives from Martin County for the period of 1777 to the present:

Whitmel Hill and William Slade, 1777; Nathan Mayo and Edmundson E. Smithwick, 1778; Samuel Smithwick and Samuel Williams, 1779; Edmund Smithwick and John Averit (Everett), 1780; Samuel Smithwick and Samuel Williams, 1781-1783; Nathan Mayo and John Ross, 1784; Edmund Smithwick and Samuel Williams, 1785; Joseph Bryan and William McKenzie, 1786; Joseph Bryan and Edmund Smithwick, 1787; William Williams and Ebenezer Slade, 1788; William Wililams and John Mayo, 1789; Ebenezer Slade and Jesse Cherry, 1790-1791; Jesse Cherry and Ebenezer Smithwick, 1792; Ebenezer Smithwick and William Griffin, 1793; Matthew Yarrell and John Kennedy, 1794; Joseph Bryan and Jesse Cherry, 1795; G. Sheppard and John Stewart, 1796; Jeremiah Slade and John Hyman, 1797-1800; William Biggs and Jesse Cherry, 1801; Jeremiah Slade and Edmund Smithwick 1802; Thomas Hyman and William Pierce, 1803;

Stephen Fagan and Joel Cherry, 1804; James Burroughs and Joel Cherry, 1805; James Wiggins and James Burroughs, 1806; Joel Cherry and James Sheppard, 1807-1808; Henry G. Williams and Joel Cherry, 1809; Henry G. Williams and James Sheppard, 1810; Joel Cherry and Andrew Joyner, 1811-1813; Simmons J. Baker and John Guyther, 1814; Simmons J. Baker and Gabriel L. Stewart, 1815; Joel Cherry and Gabriel L. Stewart, 1816; Darling Cherry and Joseph J. Williams, 1817; William Roulhac and Darling Cherry, 1818; Joseph R. Ballard and Darling Cherry, 1819-1820; Alfred M. Slade and Joseph R. Ballard, 1821; Jesse Cooper and Lawrence Cherry, 1822; Lawrence Cherry and Gabriel L. Stewart, 1823-1824; David Latham and Jesse Cooper, 1825-1826; Gabriel L. Stewart and Jesse Cooper, 1827; Jesse Cooper and David Latham, 1828; Jesse Cooper and William Watts, 1829-1830;

Joseph Robinson and John Cloman, 1831; James L. G. Baker and Edwin S. Smithwick, 1832; John Cloman and Edwin S. Smithwick, 1833; Raleigh Roebuck and Alfred M. Slade, 1834-1835.

Apparently the number of representatives from this county dropped from two to one in 1836. The following are from that time, the elected apparently to serve two years:

Raleigh Roebuck, 1836-1838; Asa Biggs, 1840-1842; J. Woolard, 1844; A. H. Coffield, 1846-1848; William L. Mizelle, 1850; A. S. Mooring, 1852; John Watts, 1854; S. W. Outterbridge, 1856 and 1864; A. Moore, 1858; J. L. Ewell, 1860; James Robinson, 1862; Abner S. Williams, 1866; Jesse J. Smith, 1868, (The Tarboro Southerner on June 30, 1870 said: "Mr. George H. Gregory was nominated for the House of Representatives against Jesse Jolly Smith, the rotating doctor of Jamesville;, so Gregory represented the county in 1870; J. R. Mizelle, 1872-1875.

Other sources list James Edwin Moore as a representative from the county in 1865-1866 and 1872. Moore was also listed as a senator from 1866 to 1867.

Listings of other county representatives include: Napoleon B. Fagan, 1876-1879; H. D. Roberson, 1879; David Worthington, 1881-1885; John W. Manning, 1887; J. B. Coffield, 1889-1891; M. T. Lawrence, 1893-1895; Charles C. Fagan, 1897; Harry W. Stubbs, 1899-1903, 1909-1911 and 1917-1919; J. B. Coffield, 1905; J. A. Whitley, 1907; Archer R. Dunning, 1913-1915; Clayton Moore, 1921-1925; James A. Everett, 1927-1929; J. Calvin Smith, 1931-1933; Hugh G. Horton, 1935-1939; Clarence W. Griffin, 1941-1945; Chas. B. Martin, 1947; Alexander Corey, 1949; Ethna G. Anderson, 1951; Alexander Corey, 1953; R. Frank Everett, 1955-1959; Elbert S. Peel, Jr., 1961; Paul D. Roberson, 1963-1965; James A. Everett, Jr., 1967-1974, and George P. Cullipher, elected November 5, 1974—

CHAPTER IV

TOWNSHIPS, TOWNS

After several previous attempts had failed, Martin County was created by a special act of the Provincial General Assembly in New Bern on March 14, 1774, and for a little more than a century thereafter it continued as a single political entity, with no officially defined subdivisions other than the four or five towns which were incorporated during that period. Some arbitrarily numbered districts were set up on several different occasions for various reasons in the early history of the county, but they were not permanent and no definite township lines were designated until 1879.

At the first term of court held in April, 1774, to perfect machinery for government of the county, five numbered districts were mentioned for listing taxable property and a little later seven justices of the peace were appointed to administer the "test oath" in various sections, but the lines were not clearly drawn or specified. Census enumerators also divided the county into sections for their own convenience at times, and it is possible that three districts or townships with somewhat nebulous boundaries may have existed prior to October 14, 1879, when a joint meeting of justices of the peace and commissioners was held to designate definite boundaries and names for nine townships. They were Jamesville, Griffins, Williams, Williamston, Bear Grass, Cross Roads, Robersonville, Hamilton, and Goose Nest. The tenth township, Poplar Point, was created at a meeting of the commissioners and magistrates on May 3, 1880, and this necessitated changing the boundaries of Williamston, Hamilton, Cross Roads and Bear Grass Townships, which was done at subsequent meetings in 1880.

The ten townships continue to this day, with boundaries generally the same as when they were set up and revised by the commissioners and magistrates at their meetings in 1879 and 1880, with the exception of two. Extensive changes were made in the boundaries of Hamilton and Poplar Point Townships in 1924, a substantial portion of the latter being added to Hamilton Township by action of the board of commissioners.

Boundaries and names of the nine townships created at the joint meeting of the commissioners and magistrates on October 14, 1879—

with amendemts made after Poplar Point Township was set up on May 2, 1880—are recorded in minutes of the meetings substantially as follows:

"Be it remembered that on this, the 14th day of October, 1879, the board of county commissioners met at the courthouse in Williamston, N. C. (pursuant to adjournment), together with the magistrates of the county. A majority of each being present, J. A. Whitley was called to the chair."

"Ordered by the board of county commissioners and magistrates of the county that six new townships be created, forming nine townships in all, named and bounded as follows:"

Jamesville Township

"Beginning at the mouth of Welch's Creek, up the Roanoke River to the mouth of Devil's Gut, thence up the Devil's Gut to the mouth of Gardner's Creek, thence up Gardner's Creek to the mouth of Deep Run Swamp, thence up the run of said swamp to the public road leading from Jamesville to Washington, thence westwardly with the road to Griffins Township line, thence along said line to Beaufort County line, thence along with said line to Washington County line, thence along said line to the beginning."

Griffins Township

"Beginning at the Beaufort County line at the run of Gum Swamp, thence up said swamp to Lanier's Pocosin, thence through the pocosin to the head of Little Creek, thence down Little Creek to Smithwick's Creek, thence up Smithwick's Creek to Flag Pen Branch, thence up Flag Pen Branch to White Oak Pocosin Branch, thence down White Oak Pocosin Branch to Keeper's Branch, thence up Keeper's Branch to the Haw Branch, thence up Haw Branch to the head of Haw Branch, thence on east course to Bear Pond, thence Bear Pond to Laurel Pocosin, thence Laurel Pocosin to the Bay, thence the Bay to East Prong of Smithwick's Creek, thence up Smithwick's Creek to the head of said creek, thence a straight line to Beaufort County line, thence the county line to the beginning."

Williams Township

"On the south by Griffins Township line, on the west by the Williamston Township line, on the north by the Roanoke River, and east by the Jamesville Township line."

Williamston Township

"Beginning at Willow Point on Roanoke River, thence a straight line to Pasture Neck Bridge on Conoho Creek, thence up Conoho Creek to the mouth of Little Conoho Creek, thence up said creek to Mobley Mill, thence up said mill pond to the mouth of Beaver Dam Branch, thence up said branch to the fork of said branch, thence up the west fork of said branch to the head, thence a straight line to the head of Reedy Swamp, thence down said swamp to the Gorham Mill, thence down said mill run to Coltrain's Mill, thence down Leggett's Creek to the Roanoke River, thence up the river to the beginning."

Bear Grass Township

"Beginning in the Gum Swamp where the county line crosses, thence north with the Griffins Township line to the mouth of Little Creek, thence westwardly with Peal's Mill Run to the mill, thence up the mill pond to the Gorham Mill, thence with the Gorham Mill Pond and Reedy Swamp to the Williamston and Greenville road, with said road to the new road near Sarah Stalls, thence along said road to Turkey Swamp, thence down the Turkey Swamp to Beaufort and Martin County line, thence with said line to the beginning."

Cross Roads Township

"Beginning at the mouth of Turkey Swamp and running up said swamp to the new road near David Gurganus, Jr., thence up the new road to the Williamston and Greenville road, thence down the Williamston road to Reedy Swamp, thence up Reedy Swamp to its head, thence a straight line to the head of the west fork of Beaver Dam Swamp, thence down Beaver Dam Swamp, (to the) mouth of the branch between John D. Simpson and Jesse Moore farms, thence up said branch to the Wildcat Road, thence along Jesse Moore's line to his corner in Leggett's Branch, thence down said branch to Huskanaw Swamp, thence down swamp to the beginning."

Robersonville Township

"Beginning at the Pitt County line near Thomas D. Carson's, thence with the said Pitt County line to the run of Flat Swamp, thence down the run of said swamp to the run of Tranters Creek, thence up the run of said creek to the fork of the Ross and Huskanaw Swamp to the public road near where John Griffin lived, the farm now owned by the Joseph Hoff heirs, the said swamp known at that point as Cabin Branch, thence up said branch to its head, thence a westwardly course to opposite the widow Julia Council's on the road from Bethel to Hamilton, thence up said road to the Edgecombe County line, thence with the Edgecombe County line to the beginning."

Hamilton Township

"Beginning at Taylor's Ferry on the Roanoke River, thence along the present public ferry road to the public road leading from Hamilton to Palmyra, thence a straight line to the head of Rocky Swamp, thence along Goose Nest Township line to the Edgecombe County (line), thence along said line to the Hamilton and Bethel road, thence down said road to opposite Julia Council's, the corner of Robersonville Township line, thence along said line to Bates' Branch, thence up said branch to the Washington and Hamilton Road, thence along said road to Chapel Branch, thence down said branch to the Williamston and Hamilton road, thence along said road to the Poplar Point road, thence along said road to Poplar Point on the Roanoke River, thence up said river to the beginning."

Goose Nest Township

"Beginning at Taylor's Ferry on the Roanoke River, thence running (along) the present public ferry road to the road leading from Hamilton to Palmyra, thence a straight line to the head of Rocky Swamp, thence down the run of said swamp to the run of Conoho Creek, thence down the run of said creek to the mouth of Salsbury's Mill race, thence up the run of said mill race to the mill, thence up the left-hand prong of the Salsbury Mill Pond to the head, thence a straight line to the Edgecombe County line, thence along said line to the Halifax County line, thence along said county line to the mouth of Kehukee Run in the Roanoke River, thence down said run to the beginning."

"Ordered by the board that the citizens of the several townships in the county be requested to assemble in their respective townships on Saturday, the 1st day of November, 1879, for the purpose of selecting two persons in each township to be recommended by said board to the Governor of North Carolina for appointment as magistrates in said townships, and that the officers of said meetings be requested to certify their proceedings to the clerk of said board on Monday, the 3rd of November, 1879."

George C. Lamb served as clerk to the board at the session on October 14, 1879; also at the session on May 3, 1880, when Poplar Point Township was created and revisions were made in boundaries of Williamston, Bear Grass, and Cross Roads Townships. Members of the county board of commissioners at that time were J. A. Whitley, chairman; H. Brown, Alex Brown, W. T. Keel, and H. W. Mizell. A minor amendment was made to the Cross Roads boundaries on August 2, 1880.

Poplar Piont Township

Minutes of a meeting of the Martin County Board of Commissioners and Magistrates held on May 3, 1880, in addition to changing the boundaries of other townships affected, contain the following order relative to establishing Poplar Point Township: "Ordered new township be created known as 'Poplar Point' in the county of Martin and bounded as follows:"

"Commencing at the Cox line on the Roanoke River, thence along said line to Deep Bottom Branch, thence up said branch to Conoho Creek, thence up said creek to Spring Green Branch, thence up said branch to its head near the Robersonville and Greenville Road near Mrs. Mezillia Purvis, thence down the Robersonville Road to the bridge across Huskanaw Swamp, thence down said swamp to the mouth of Leggett's Branch, thence up said branch to Jesse Moore's corner, thence along said Moore's line to the Wildcat Road near where old Sharon meeting house formerly stood, in a branch, thence down said branch to the mill pond, thence down said mill pond to the mill, thence down Little Conoho Creek to Conoho Creek, thence down said creek to Pasture Neck bridge, thence a straight line to Willow Point on the Roanoke River, thence up said river to the beginning."

Boundary lines of the ten townships remained substantially the same as previously outlined until September 6, 1924, when the county board of commissioners, acting on the request of a petition signed by a partnership and eighteen freeholders who owned land in the section affected, adopted an order taking a sizable area from Poplar Point and adding it to Hamilton Township. Minutes show the land taken from Poplar Point and added to Hamilton Township is bounded as follows: "Beginning at the Cox line on the Roanoke River, thence along said township line to Deep Bottom Branch, to Conoho Creek, thence down said creek to Pasture Neck bridge, thence a straight line to Willow Point on the Roanoke River, thence up said river to the beginning, the same being what is now the northern portion of Poplar Point Township adjoining Hamilton Township, and lying on the northern side of Conoho Creek."

The county board voted unanimously in favor of the change, members being Henry C. Green, chairman; J. G. Barnhill, W. B. Harrington, T. B. Slade, Jr., and C. A. Askew. Those signing the petition requesting the change were: D. G. Matthews, J. D. Tetterton, Lenton Roebuck, Meadows & Staton, R. G. Harrison, B. A. Critcher, W. S. Rhodes, T. B. Slade, Jr., L. R. Everett, B. F. Myers, T. F. Pippen, W. E. Davis, W. J. Beach, H. S. Johnson, J. M. Edmondson, William Ley, P. H. Davenport, C. D. Perkins, P. L. Salsbury.

A letter written in 1887 by W. T. Crawford, then clerk of the superior court of Martin County, indicates that Hamilton Township may also have been known as Brooksville about that time. The only other time Brooksville appears in the records is as the name of a school, also called "Ballard's," in Poplar Point Township. Text of the Crawford letter—dated April 17, 1887, and addressed to W. L. Sanders, Secretary of State, Raleigh, was copied from a microfilm in the State Department of Archives—reads as follows:

"Sir: I read your certificate of the names of the justices appointed for Martin County. I find upon examination there is no opportunity for Hamilton Township or Brooksville Township. I wish you would examine the list again and see if you have not made a mistake. The names returned by you correspond with the list we sent up, so far as it goes, and our representative says he returned the original list as sent to him. Please examine and let me know immediately. Also inform me if you sent town commissioners, or do I qualify them from the list furnished by you."

"You will find in Griffins Township the name of S. R. Henderson, which ought to be S. R. Hardison, also in the same township Daniel R. Daniel which ought to be David R. Daniel."

Eleven towns have been incorporated in Martin County during the 200 years since it was establsihed in 1774, and all except one are still in existence. They are as follows, listed in the order and year in which they were chartered: Williamston, 1779; Blountville and Jamesville, 1785; Hamilton, 1804; Robersonville, 1870; Oak City, first chartered as "Conoho" in 1891, named changed to "Oak City" in 1905 (prior to 1891 was sometimes called "Goose Nest") Parmele and Everetts, 1893; Gold Point, 1899 (previously known as "Long Towns"); Hassell, 1903 (also known as Sycamore Grove prior to incorporation); and Bear Grass, 1909.

Four of the first towns which were incorporated, being dependent almost entirely on water transportation for whatever commerce existed at the time, were located on the south bank of the Roanoke River. Three of them—Williamston, Jamesville and Hamilton, established and incorporated during the latter part of the 18th or early 19th centuries—are still among the more important and progressive municipalities in the section. However, the fourth—Blountville, incorporated in 1785—has disappeared from the scene altogether and, except for the act of incorporation, there is no information at all about it.

Five of the other towns—Robersonville, Oak City, Parmele, Everetts and Hassell—were incorporated just before or shortly after the railroad was extended into the county and were located along its tracks. The remaining two towns—Bear Grass and Gold Point—have neither water nor rail transportation facilities and were developed principally to serve community needs. Three of the ten townships in the county—Williams, Griffins and Poplar Point—have never had incorporated towns within their borders.

In addition to the incorporated towns, there have been a large number of community centers, totaling more than 30, at least 16 of which were designated as post offices at one time or another in past years. They were usually named for individuals, schools, churches, stores, or geographical locations, and served as gathering or shopping places for people of the various sections. Among those once but no longer listed as post offices were: Amazon, located in the Bear Grass section; Amherst, in Griffins Township; Ballard, in Poplar Point Township; Clark's Store (later renamed "Roanoke"), above Hamilton on the Roanoke River; Colley, between Everetts and Robersonville; Davis' Store, possibly in the lower part of Jamesville Township; Dardens; Dymond City; Gardner's or Gardner's Bridge, about where now located; Keneth, probably near present Macedonia community; Poplar Point; Roanoke, upper part of county, on the river; Tranters, probably near the Pitt County line in Bear Grass or Cross Roads Township; Wilsonville, near Everetts; Wynnsville, probably in Cross Roads Township; and Goose Nest, post office name later changed to Conoho and then to Oak City.

Other place names of communities which were neither incorporated nor had post offices include Daly's, Deep Run, Flat Swamp, Grundy, Hardison's Mill, Hog Town (also spelled Hogg Town), Kehuky, Long Town, Macedonia, Megessa, Shell Landing, Spring Green, Tar Landing (two of them), Sycamore Grove, Waring, and Welch's Creek.

First official mention of settlements in what is now Martin County is contained in "Laws of North Carolina for 1755," designating places for examination and inspection required at that time for various agricultural products before they could be offered for sale. Among those in Tyrrell County then, which includes present-day Martin, were Hog Town, Gardner's, Daley's and Welch's Creek. Hog Town was on the Roanoke River just below the present location of Hamilton; Gardner's is believed to have been the same as Lower Shel Landing, about where present U. S. Highway 64 crosses Gardner's Creek between Williamston and Jamesville; Daley's is now called Daley's Hill, located on the Roanoke River not far from the present Dardens community; and Welch's Creek, the stream itself being the present dividing line between Martin and Washington counties.

A map published by Rand McNally Company in 1884, owned by Miss Maggie Bell Jones of Hamilton, shows that there were nineteen towns and communities in Martin County at that time. Many of them have since disappeared from all maps, and some of these have been forgotten, few people remembering where they were located.

Listed on the old map were Bear (spelled "Bare") Grass, Colley, Deep Run, Dymond City, Everetts, Flat Swamp, Goose Nest, Grundy, Hamilton, Hardison Mill, Jamesville, Megessa, Poplar Point, Roanoke, Robersonville, Waring, Williamston, Wilsonville, and Wynnsville.

Reviewing the names of some of the older place names, it is learned that Colley, the old home of Dr. James L. Teel, is now associated with Colley Swamp, between Everetts and Robersonville. Deep Run, believed to have been on the old J. & W. Railroad line between Jamesville and Dymond City is no longer remembered. Dymond City, once one of the more progressive towns in the county, is only a memory to a few of the older people of the section, its buildings having been destroyed in forest fires long since, and the site reclaimed by the wilderness. Grundy also apparently was near the old J. & W. Railroad line, but few if any living today remember it.

Hardison Mill in Griffins Township still has some significance as a place name, but the community is now generally known as Farm Life. Megessa was on the old J. & W. line and the homeplace of the late Abraham Fisher, manager of an English company's holdings in the Dymond City area at one time. Poplar Point, also occasionally referred to as Poplar Point Landing, is all grown up and is no more. Getting its mail from Palmyra after being discontinued as a post office in 1851, the little center of Roanoke is believed to have been on or near the Williams family lands between Hamilton and Palmyra along what is known as the "River Road."

Waring, served by the Jamesville post office, also is believed to have been a whistle stop on the J. & W. Railroad. A somewhat similar name, Warring (or Warren) Neck applies to a small locality and a creek with three prongs which empties into Roanoke River above the Weyerhaeuser plant in the lower part of the county. Wynnsville, located about nine miles southwest of Williamston, is probably the Cross Roads community of today. Another center was Wilsonville, old home of Billy Wilson, father of the late Marshall D. Wilson of Williamston. It was located not far from the present Wilson Chapel Church and had a post office for some years prior to 1884, when it was discontinued and mail for the section was sent to Everetts.

After the Dymond City post office was discontinued in 1894, mail for that community was sent to a new post office called "Amherst," set up at the home of John W. Manning in Griffins Township. Amherst was discontinued as a post office in 1907 and mail for the section was handled through Jamesville afterwards. Amazon also had a brief life as a post office, mail for its patrons being sent through the Williamston office following its discontinuance June 30, 1900. Ballard post office, believed to have been in the Poplar Point section, was discontinued in June, 1895, its mail likewise going to the Williamston office after that. Bear Grass had only a brief career as a post office, although the town is still incorporated. The post office was established in March, 1885, and discontinued less than two years later, in January, 1887, mail for the section being sent to Keelsville, which was evidently in adjacent Pitt County, as there is no record of such a post office ever having been located in Martin. Mail for the Bear Grass community is now handled through the Williamston office. Another community probably located in the Bear Grass section was Tranters, which was discontinued in January, 1904, its mail afterwards being handled by the Williamston office.

Clark's Store was located above Hamilton in the section where Roanoke later took over the handling of its mail, probably during the latter part of the 18th century. Davis' Store possibly was in the Dardens section, although its location is not definite. It is another of the very early post offices, having been discontinued in February, 1833, with no mention being made of the reassignment of its mail at that time. The only mention of Kehuky is contained in the act incorporating the town of Blountville, which was said to be on part of the land of Whitmel Hill, located "on the south side of Roanoke River, known by the name of Kehuky." Keneth was the name of a section which had a post office briefly around 1895, when it was discontinued and mail for its patrons afterwards was handled through Williamston. It is believed to have been in the present Macedonia section, which is about seven miles south of Williamston on U. S. Highway 17.

Goose Nest was the name first for the settlement that later was incorporated as Conoho in 1891 and changed to Oak City in 1904. Spring Green is the community which developed in the neighborhood of the Primitive Baptist church of that name, located at the intersection of present State Highways 125 and 903 a few miles south of Hamilton. Long Town was the name of the little town later incorporated as Gold Point, which has permitted its charter to lapse within the past few yeras. There have been two Tar Landings in the county, the first being one of the early names for a landing on the river above the present town of Williamston and the other a community a few miles southwest of Jamesville. Sycamore Grove is also a place name for a settlement later incorporated as Hassell in the western part of the county near the Edgecombe line.

As near as can be determined now, the Hog Town (sometimes spelled "Hogg Town") mentioned in the 1775 law of the Provincial Assembly was located a short distance from the river from Hamilton on land now owned by Henry Winslow. The town was never incorporated, but there was said to have been a post office there up to about the time Hamilton was incorporated in 1804. Prior to then, Hog Town had also served as a polling place for elections in the upper part of the county. A special act was passed by the General Assembly in 1804 providing that separate elections for the upper end of the county previously held at Hog Town be thereafter held at "some convenient place in the town of Hamilton." It also provided for separate elections for the lower end of the county at "James Town," and that votes be counted and "added to the votes taken at the general election held at the courthouse in Williamston." Hog Town has been little mentioned since that time, and there is little or no sign to be found that it ever existed.

Williamston

Exact date of the first settlement at what was to become Williamston cannot be determined from records presently available, but it is known there was a village in the general locality as early as 1730. The first settlers are said to have moved from Bertie County to the south side of the Morattock (now Roanoke) River and located near the ruins of what had been a Tuscarora Indian village long before the white man ever came to the New World. The locality was known to the Indians as "Squhawky," but it was called 'Tar Landing" by the newcomers, as it gradually became the principal shipping point for the tar, pitch, turpentine, and other forest products and meat produced in the section.

The settlement prospered and was designated the seat of government when the county was chartered in March, 1774. A little over five years later—during the Revolutionary War—it became the first incorporated town in the county and was named "Williamston" in the charter granted at a session of the General Assembly held in Halifax during October and November, 1779. Chapter XXV of the Private Laws of North Carolina—Martin's Compilation, 1785-1790—entitled "An Act for Erecting a Town on the Lands of Thomas Hunter at Squhawky, in Martin County," reads as follows:

"I. Whereas it hath been represented to this Assembly that the land of Thomas Hunter, on the south side of Roanoke River known by the name of Squhawky, in Martin County, is a healthy pleasant situation and very conveniently situated for trade and commerce, and the said Thomas Hunter having signified his consent to have seventy-eight acres of the land laid off for a town, which will greatly promote the trade and navigation of the said river:"

"II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is enacted by the authority of the same, That the said seventy-eight acres of land, beginning at the north side of a branch, thence running north, 59 degrees west, 87 poles, to a stake, thence north, 55 degrees east, 180 poles, to a red oak, then south, 50 degrees east, 48 poles, into the aforesaid branch, then up the various courses of the said branch to the first station, laid off in lots and streets according to a plan before this assembly, be and the same is hereby constituted and estabalished a town, and shall be called by the name of Williamston."

"III. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that from and after the passing of this act, Samuel Williams, Thomas Hunter, Samuel Smithwick, William Slade, Edward Smithwick and John Griffin, gentlemen, be, and they and every of them are hereby constituted commissioners and trustees for designing, building and carrying on the said town, and they shall stand seized in an indefeasible estate, in fee simple, in the said seventy-eight acres of land as aforesaid, to and for the uses, intents and purposes, hereby declared; and the said commissioners, or any three of them, shall have full power and authority to meet as often as they shall think necessary, to appoint a public quay on Roanoke River, adjoining the said town for a public land, as they shall think convenient and necessary. And whereas subscriptions have been made for the greatest part of the lots in the said town."

"IV. Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said commissioners, or a majority of them, shall appoint a time, and giving public notice thereof, for meeting the subscribers of the said land for determining the property of each particular lot, which shall be drawn by ballot, in a fair manner, by direction and in the presence of a majority of the said commissioners at least and each subscriber shall be entitled to the lot or lots which shall happen to be drawn for him and correspond with the number contained in the aforesaid plan of the said town; and the said commissioners, or a majority of them, shall make and execute deeds for the granting and conveying the said lots contained in the said town to the respective subscribers, for the same, their heirs and assigns forever, and also to all and every person and persons who shall purchase any other lot or lots in the said town, at the proper cost and charges of the said grantee or grantees to whom the same shall be conveyed; and any person claiming any lot or lots in the said town by virtue of such conveyance, shall and may hold the same in fee simple."

"V. Provided nevertheless, That the grantee or grantees of any lot or lots in the said town so conveyed, shall within five years next after the date of the conveyance for the same, erect, build and finish, on each lot so conveyed, one well framed or brick house, fourteen feet square at the least, and ten feet pitch in the clear, or proportionable to such dimensions, if such grantee or grantees shall have two or more lots continguous, or shall make any other improvements on said lot or lots which the said commissioners shall judge equivalent thereto; and if the owner of any lot or lots in the said town shall fail to pursue the directions by this act prescribed for building and finishing a house, or making some other improvements thereon, as aforesaid, then such lot or lots upon which such house shall not be built and finished, or such improvements not made, shall be revested in the said commissioners, and the said commissioners, or the majority of them, may, and are hereby empowered and authorized to sell such lots for the best price that may be had, to any other person or persons applying for the same, in such manner, and under such restrictions, as they could or might have done, if such lot had not before been sold or granted."

"VI. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that the respective subscribers for the said lots shall within three months after it shall be ascertained to whom each of the said lots doth belong, in manner herein before mentioned, pay and satisfy to the said commissioners the sum of forty pounds for each lot by them subscribed for, and in case of the refusal or neglect of any subscriber to pay the said sum, the said commissioners shall and may commence a suit for the same, in their own names, and therein shall recover judgment, with cost."

"VII. And be it further enacted that all monies that shall arise from or by the disposal of such lots as may not be built on or improved agreeable to the directons of this act, within the time therein limited for that purpose, shall be paid to the said commissioners, or their successors, and by them applied to the use of the said town, for clearing the streets, erecting such public buildings or making such other improvements in the said town, as the said commissioners, or a majority of them shall think necessary."

"VIII. And for continuing the succession of the said commissioners, Be it enacted, that in case of death, refusal to act, or removal out of the country, of any of the said commissioners, the surviving or other commissioners, or the majority of them, shall assemble, and shall from time to time, by an instrument in writing under their respective hands and seals, nominate some other person, being an inhabitant or freeholder of said town, in the place of him so dying, refusing to act, or removing out of the country; which new commissioner so nominated and appointed, shall from thenceforth have the same power and authority in all things concerning the matters herein contained, as if he had been expressly nominated and appointed by this act."

The original charter has been amended and boundaries changed to enlarge the town many times in the intervening years. An act ratified December 8, 1842, provided methods for electing commissioners and empowering them to fill vacancies which might occur on the board. At that time citizens of the town were to meet at the courthouse on the last Monday in each December and elect five commissioners for terms of one year each. This act also has been changed several times and finally was repealed by acts which provided other methods of conducting elections for the municipality. Members of the board of commissioners on January 27, 1849, when an act was ratified empowering them to "superintende, manage and improve the public burying ground," were Henry Williams, D. W. Bagley, Dr. Levi H. Yates, John Watts, and George Hobbs.

The town's boundaries were extended by an act of February 16, 1859. Then, on March 11, 1885, some years after the Civil War, a special act of the General Assembly almost completely revised the charter of the town, setting up new boundaries, providing for annual municipal elections, empowering the commissioners to erect public scales "for weighing fodder, hay, oats, cotton, crude turpentine, and livestock on foot for sale in the said town," to lay out and open new streets and sidewalks, as well as to discontinue old ones, and to prohibit the erection of wooden buildings in any portion of the town. Boundaries of the town at that time did not reach to the river, but the act provided for the town to have a right of way to it and authorized construction of a public street "at least 60 feet wide from some point on the southeastern boundary of said town to the river aforesaid, and all damages and expense thereby incurred shall be paid by said town, damages to be assessed by three discreet freeholders to be appointed by the commissioners of said town." At the time this act was adopted, Wheeler Martin I was mayor and members of the board of commissioners were N. S. Godard, W. H. Carstarphen I, John H. Hatton, Riley Heath, and B. B. Watts.

Another act extending the town limits was passed by the General Assembly on February 22, 1901. In it, for the first time, Roanoke River is mentioned as one of the boundaries, the point of beginning being the mouth of Skewarkey Gut, and the south end of the river boundary was the upper end of the railroad or depot there. With the population steadily increasing, succeeding acts have materially enlarged the area of the town, also in recent years providing for increased responsibilities of the municipal government through creation of several more or less independent commissions and boards, such as the zoning commission, planning board, housing authority, and similar groups.

There are two versions concerning selection of the name "Williamston" for the town. One of them—based largely on hearsay evidence and legend—is that the name was chosen in honor of a poor Irish weaver named "Dick" Williams, who was supposed to have settled in the area around the middle of the 18th century. It is said he arrived in this country with 75 cents in his pocket, but by hard work and strict economy he managed to create a substantial fortune and became one of the most influential men in the colony.

The other version is that the town was named in honor of Colonel William Williams, scion of a wealthy and distinguished family which owned large plantations in the northwestern part of the county prior to the Revolution. The name Williams is prominently connected with the early history of the county. Colonel Williams' father, also named William Williams, migrated to this country from Wales in the early 1700's and settled on the south bank of the Roanoke River in the upper end of the county, which at that time was in Edgecombe and was later a part of Halifax before it became Martin. William Williams II was a delegate to the Hillsboro and Halifax conventions in 1776, was elected colonel of Martin County's militia when it was organized and continued in that capacity until after he was elected the county's first state senator in 1777. He resigned his military commission shortly afterwards and was succeeded as commanding officer of the county's militia by his nephew, Lt. Col. Whitmel Hill.

From its start, the population of Williamston reflected a very steady growth in official census figures, with the exception of two 10-year periods. The census for 1800 shows the town had a total count of 248 persons just 21 years after its incorporation in 1779. The count was up to 261 in 1860, but the 1870 census was taken for the county as a whole and did not have a breakdown by towns, although there was an unofficial report that 520 people lived in Williamston at that time.

If the unofficial report was true, the town lost 38 people in the next 10-year period, as the census for 1880 gives the population as 482. Branson's 1890 yearbook says there were 750 people in the town that year. Succeeding census reports show the growth of the town as follows: 1900, 912; 1910, 1,574; 1920, 1,800; 1930, 2,731; 1940, 3,966; 1950, 4,979; and 1960, 6,924. The second decrease was shown between 1960 and 1970, the report for 1970 showing a count of 6,570, down 354 from the 6,924 in 1960.

The white population is thought to have increased during this latter period, but there was a substantial loss in blacks, since a sizable number of them moved to northern cities as mechanization of farms reduced the number of job opportunities for unskilled labor in this section. The same was true for the county as a whole, as it also had a loss in population over the 10-year period covered by the latest census. It is believed both the county and town have increased in population since 1970, due to increased industrialization of the section.

The history of postal service in Williamston begins in 1793, about fourteen years after the town had been incorporated in 1779 and only four years after the federal constitution had been ratified by the state in 1779. The first post office was established almost entirely through the efforts of Samuel Johnston, former governor and first United States Senator from North Carolina. When he moved to Williamston, Johnston not only had been governor and senator, but he had also served as a member of the Continental Congress and president of two state constitutional conventions, in 1788 and 1789.

Previously a citizen of Edenton, Johnston came to Williamston to live after completing his term in the U. S. Senate in the spring of 1793, purchasing a tract of 70 acres of land at the eastern edge of Williamston from William McKenzie and establishing his residence there, calling it "My Little Hermitage." Not satisfied with the mail service then available, he applied to the federal government for its improvement. Under date of March 4, 1793, Postmaster General Timothy Pickering forwarded papers to him authorizing establishment of a post office in Williamston. In an accompanying letter, Pickering said the person selected by Johnston could enter immediately upon the duties of postmaster after subscribing to the proper oath of office. The record is somewhat obscure, but it appears that Thomas Jones became the first postmaster, his initial accounting to the Post Office Department being rendered as of October 1, 1793.

Jones was succeeded in the office by Thomas Hunter, probably in 1797, although the date is not definite. There is an apparent discrepancy or error in records available about the third postmaster, it being recorded on January 21, 1800, that Richard Williams succeeded "William Hunter" in the office. There is no other record of a "William" Hunter holding the office, so it is presumed the reference was to Thomas Hunter, who was the second postmaster. From that point the records appear to be in order, with the possible exception of the Civil War period (1861-1865), when Capt. John R. Lanier, Friley W. Moore, and possibly others served as postmaster under jurisdiction of the Confederate States government. Starting with 1808, after Richard

Williams, the list of Williamston postmasters and dates they began serving follows:

James Bernet, July 1, 1808; Samuel Hyman, April 1, 1809; Joseph Biggs, Sr., October 1, 1812; Joseph D. Biggs, March 1, 1826; William B. Bennett, September 20, 1833; William Watts, February 26, 1834; Gilbert L. Moore, May 1, 1850; William B. Lanier, February 2, 1853; William Brenan, June 11, 1858; John R. Lanier, December 13, 1859; Nathan Thompson, Sepember 4, 1865; Alexander Jackson, May 21, 1866; Benjamin Goodman, April 15, 1869; John G. Watts, September 19, 1870; William T. Watts, February 11, 1874; Bryant B. Watts, March 24, 1875; John R. Lanier, June 1, 1885; Bryant B. Watts, April 19, 1889; Joshua L. Ewell, June 17, 1893; Bryant B. Watts, July 20, 1897; Joseph M. Sitterson, January 29, 1898; John R. Mobley, March 14, 1907; Lamuel B. Wynn, March 4, 1916; Jesse T. Price, November 9, 1921; Mrs. Fannie B. Anderson (acting), February 28, 1933; Leslie T. Fowden (acting), May 22, 1933; Leslie T. Fowden, May 16, 1934; Mrs. Susie P. Fowden (acting), October 13, 1942; Wiley E. Dunn, December 31, 1944; Mrs. Sylvia S. Clary (acting), November 30, 1959; and Leslie T. Fowden, Jr., May 26, 1961, through 1974.

The late Warren Biggs, recognized Martin County historian, made some brief notes in the late 1950's about the various men who had held the office of postmaster in Williamston, some based on old letters and papers he had accumulated in his research activities, others on reminiscences of older residents and personal contacts with some of the postmasters he had known. Reviewing the entire preceding list, his comments about them are quoted substantially as follows:

Nothing at all could be learned about Thomas Jones, the first postmaster, except that his office was located on or near the river, mail presumably being handled by stagecoach and riverboats at that time. The second postmaster, Thomas Hunter, came to this section from Chowan County, via Bertie, very probably before Martin was formed in 1774, and he gave the 78 acres of land on which Williamston was located when incorporated in 1779. The purchaser of lot No. 38, located on the south side of the present Main Street, running from the former Margolis store buliding to the intersection of Smithwick Street, defaulted on requirements contained in the deed and the property was acquired by Robert Warren. A small wooden building was constructed on the southwest corner and used as the first uptown post office, later being moved south on Smithwick Street and becoming part of the residence of S. R. Biggs, Sr. The residence was torn down in the 1970's to make way for a parking lot.

Richard Williams, the third postmaster, was a prominent figure in the county at that time and great-grandfather of James L. Williams, a painting contractor of present-day Williamston. James Bernet, who held the office next, was also a prominent citizen of the early 1800's. Samuel Hyman, the fifth postmaster, was a former sheriff of the county. He and his wife sold for $50 the land upon which the Williamston Academy was built and then gave the $50 as a contribution toward construction of the academy building.

Joseph Biggs, who came next, was a prominent religous leader, church historian, and father of Joseph D. Biggs, who followed as postmaster and later became clerk of court of the county. Little could be learned about William B. Bennett, the eighth postmaster. Major William Watts, tavern keeper and leader in political affairs of his day, was next. He was the father of several sons who became prominent in their own right in later years, including Dr. William Watts, John G. Watts and Judge Samuel W. Watts. Dr. Watts practiced medicine in Williamston for a time and then moved to Hamilton; John G. Watts was a leader in Republican politics for years and became postmaster in 1870; and Judge Samuel Watts built a residence in which he lived and practiced law, later to be known as the Carstarphen home, located on North Smithwick Street next to Skewarkee Masonic Lodge.

Gilbert L. Moore, postmaster from 1850 to 1853, was later employed in the store of D. W. Bagley. About 1870, he and his brother, Friley W. Moore—who was a Confederate States postmaster in Williamston for a brief period during the Civil War—went to Missouri and developed a prosperous business. William B. Lanier, who succeeded Moore as postmaster in 1853, became a captain in the Confederate Army and lost his life during the war. About all that could be learned about William Brenan, who next held the post office for about a year and a half, was that he was editor of the Democratic Banner at the time of his appointment.

John R. Lanier, brother of a former postmaster, Capt. William B. Lanier, assumed the duties of the office in December, 1859, served for a time, entered the Confederate Army and attained the rank of captain. He returned to Williamston after the war and became the first depot agent for the railroad after its completion in October, 1882, holding that position until he was again appointed postmaster by President Grover Cleveland in June, 1885. Nathan Thompson, who was the first Williamston postmaster after the Civil War, was brother to a shipowner, Capt. Thomas Thompson, the two having made several trips together as blockade runners during the conflict. Little or nothing is known about the next man to hold the office, Alexander Jackson, who served for about three years. His successor, Benjamin

Goodman, was a Jewish carpetbagger who came down from the north, got into a lot of trouble while he was postmaster, and wound up in jail after holding the office for only a little over a year.

The John G. Watts who became postmaster in 1870 was a prominent Republican politician and eldest son of Dr. William Watts. Nothing can be learned about the William T. Watts of 1874. Bryant B. Watts, third postmaster in succession by the same surname, was prominent in political circles of the county for a number of years. He was appointed postmaster three different times, serving for a little more than 10 years the first time, from 1875 to 1885; giving way for four years to Capt. John R. Lanier; returning in 1889 to serve four more years before yielding to Joshua L. Ewell, who was in the office from 1893 until 1897; and then serving a little more than a year before being succeeded by Joseph M. Sitterson in 1898. Joshua L. Ewell was remembered up to about 25 years ago by a number of the older residents as quite an unusual person who served as a trial justice of the peace in Williamston for many years.

Joseph M. Sitterson was considered one of the greatest characters ever to hold the office of postmaster in Williamston.. A one-time clown for a circus, he was said to have been the town's funny man for years. The next postmaster, John Robert (Bob) Mobley, was a surveyor and served as poastmaster for about nine years. Lamuel B. Wynne, a native of the Everetts section, moved to Williamston and afterwards became postmaster, serving from 1916 through the first World War until he retired in 1921.

Jesse T. Price had been connected with the Postal Service in several capacities before he became postmaster in 1921. He worked diligently to improve the service, effecting a number of changes for the better and serving until 1933. Mrs. Fannie Biggs Anderson served as interim appointment as postmaster between the terms of Price and Leslie T. Fowden, Sr., a former insurance man, peanut buyer, and drug store operator, who entered the office in 1933 and continued there until his death in 1942. His widow, Mrs. Susie P. Fowden, then became acting postmaster and served until Wiley E. Dunn was appointed in 1944. Dunn, who came to Williamston from Wilson as the town's first plumbing and heating contractor in the early 1920's, retired in 1959, and was succeeded by Mrs. Sylvia S. Clary as acting postmaster. She served until Leslie T. Fowden, Jr., who came up through the ranks as a postal employee and was the son of a former postmaster, assumed the duties of the office on May 26, 1961.

Postal records show that William Watts held the office longer than any other postmaster, a little over 16 yeras. Wiley E. Dunn was next, with a service record of nearly 15 years, followed in order by Joseph Biggs, Sr., almost 14 years; Leslie T. Fowden, Jr., over 13½ years in 1974; and Jesse T. Price, over 12 years. Leslie T. Fowden, Jr., and his father had a combined total length of service of more than 23 years.

Prior to establishment of the post office in Williamston, mail for people in the section was said to have been left at the nearest taverns by post riders and stagecoaches for delivery by neighbors to the persons addressed. There was little mail then, and deliveries were few and far between. The Rural Free Delivery system began in the United States about the start of this century, and the first route in Martin County was established on November 1, 1901. Starting from Williamston, it extended south at the Washington Road, turning southwest to go by the Bear Grass section, turned southeast there and went through the Smithwicks Creek area before making another turn to return to Williamston by way of Kader Lilley's store in Griffins Township. Duffie Hines was the first carrier, being paid about $60 per month. He resigned after about a year. Village delivery service began in Williamston April 17, 1916, Jesse Ambers being the first carrier. There are now four rural delivery routes from the Williamston post office and complete city delivery service in virtually all sections of the town.

When Samuel Johnston had the first post office established in Williamston in 1793, the town had only about 20 families and 40 buildings, the latter including residences, stores, taverns, barns, blacksmith shops and the like. Early post offices were located in a variety of places, including stores, residences, and occasionally small especially built buildings. They were moved from place to place as the postmastership changed hands, sometimes quite frequently. Exact location of the first office is not known, but it was said to be near the river. In 1886, Capt. John R. Lanier had the office in the old Biggs Drug Store, several doors west from the Smithwick Street intersection on the south side of Main Street. Among other places where Warren Biggs said the office was located at various times before and since then were the following:

In a building where the Griffin & Martin law office is now located, next to the Municipal Building; in a small yellow building where the Municipal Building now stands; in the N. S. Peel Building occupied in 1974 by Baldwin's store; in the small brick building housing Mobley Insurance Agency; in a wooden office later occupied by Dr. J. B. H. Knight at the site of the present Manning Office Building; at the site of H. O. Peele's law office; at the southeast corner of Main and Smithwick Streets, present site of the Lawyers' Building; in a small building where the Margolis store was later constructed; several times in buldings at the southwest corner of Main and Smithwick Streets, site of the present Alpha Cleaners; and in the buliding next to Tar Heel Apartments where the Pacemaker store is located. After renting and leasing space for the post office for almost a century and a half, the Post Office Department in 1938 built its own modern new home at a cost of nearly $80,000 on the old D. W. Bagley property on South Main Street and the local office has been located there since.

A number of incidental notes have been accumulated over the years about the postal service and mails that have some connection with the Williamston post office. They come from various sources, including newspaper clippings, letters, personal papers and notes and a few entries from the diary of Elder C. B. Hassell. Few of them are related in any way to each other, being random items collected for the casual interest they may contain for patrons of the office.

Answering some inquiries, a letter from W. W. Howes, First Assistant Postmaster General, dated June 9, 1939, says, "The earliest available record of mail service to Williamston indicates that John Watts was the contractor who served the office once in two weeks on a route from Halifax to Plymouth and Windsor, prior to September, 1794, when the contract was let to William Pierce. The date of the first service by Mr. Watts is not available." The letter also contained information that "The earliest available record of compensation shows that the postmaster there (Williamston) received $53.58 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1825. The earliest available record of receipts shows that the net receipts were $111.04 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1827."

Elder C. B. Hassell had three entries in his diary about the mail service and post office around the middle of the 19th century. The earliest, dated July 1, 1847, says "A new arrangement for the mails took place today. Instead of four mails a week as heretofore, there are now to be nine, a vast change for the better." Next, on July 23, 1858, he said he "also had the distance measured from the post office (William Brenan's), two doors below the sixth cross street (Smithwick), to the water at Steamboat Landing and found it to be three-fourths of a mile plus 88 yards. The distance from the lower corner of Hassell's storehouse to the river is three-fourths of a mile plus 115 yards. Next, shortly after the Civil War began, a diary entry of July 20, 1861, reported that Hassell had, "as agent of the stockholders of the Roanoke Steam Navigation Company, let out to the lowest bidder—under sealed proposals—the carrying of the Confederate States mail from Plymouth to Hamilton for two years. Thomas E. Huff took it at

$696 per year; thereby the company made clear out of it $389 per year."

That it was an all-day trip from Tarboro to Williamston back in 1874 may be gathered from a brief article in the Tarboro Enquirer-Southerner of July 17, that year, reading as follows: "A mail route has been established between Tarboro and Williamston. The mail carrier will leave Tarboro on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 6 a.m. and will go by Bethel and Robersonville and arrive at Williamston at 5 p.m." There was no mention of return trips, but it is presumed they were made on the alternate days.

Coming into the early part of the 20th century, the establishment of rural free delivery routes became of primary concern to the local postmasters. The first such route in Martin County was put into service from the Williamston office on November 1, 1901, Duffie Hines being the first carrier. In June of the following year, there was an item in the Williamston Enterprise to the effect that "Special Agent Veazey, of the Rural Free Delivery Service, is at work in this county. There will be two or three routes established in the near future." It is not known when, where, or the number of routes that were established as the result of his work at that time.

About two years later, however, on September 2, 1904, there was a brief item in the same paper relating that within the past five years the number of free delivery routes had increased in the nation from 200 to "about 25,000." It was also stated then that every carrier who covered what was then known as a "full route" received the maximum pay of $60 per month, or $720 per year. Those who covered shorter routes did not get the maximum salary, and there was no explanation as to what constituted a "full route."

The No. 1 route from the Williamston post office was said to have been one of the first rural free delivery routes in North Carolina. It had several carriers before "Captain" T. W. Thomas took over the job on November 1, 1904, retaining it until his retirement more than 18 years later, on August 20, 1923. He used horse-drawn vehicles to cover the route.

Village delivery service was started in the town April 17, 1916, when 400 pieces of mail were handled. Jesse T. Price, later to become Williamston postmaster, was said to have been first to install a mailbox at his residence. Jesse Ambers and Roger Critcher were the first village carriers. Critcher served for a relatively brief period, but Ambers continued in the position until he entered the military service during World War I and returned to serve as a second carrier for a number of years afterwards. After Ambers entered the service, Miss Kate E. Philpott took the job on October 2, 1918, being one of the first women letter carriers in the nation. She either walked or rode a bicycle in covering the route for more than 22 years until her retirement in March, 1941. During that period she was the subject of feature articles in a number of newspapers, usually being photographed standing beside her bicycle carrying a letter carrier's bag.

An article in the Williamston Enterprise in April, 1945, gave some statistics to reflect expansion of the service following establishment of the Rural Free Delivery system. Routes in existence from the Williamston office in 1949 served more than one-third of the population of the entire county, or 8,376 individuals, through 1,620 boxes belonging to 1,629 families living on the three routes. The distance traveled each day was 184.10 miles, or slightly more than 60 miles for each carrier. A five-day count of mail handled in October, 1948, showed 11,613 pieces of mail of all classes were delivered by the three rural carriers, who had a total length of service at that time of 82 years.

Most of the figures have increased in the years since 1949. There were four routes out of the Williamston office in 1974, serving considerably more than a third of the total county population, including 8,977 individual patrons, representing 2,069 families and 1,899 boxes. The four carriers traveled a total of 286 miles each day, an average of 71½ miles per man. Due to centralization in the method of handling the mails, it is difficult to obtain exact figures on the amount of mail handled by the office in recent years, but it was conservatively estimated in December, 1974, to be in excess of 25,000 pieces of all classes daily.

Williamston's importance as a town and its growth and development immediately before and after its incorporation was largely based on two factors. First was its location on the banks of a navigable river; and, second, its designation as the seat of county government when Martin County was formed in 1774.

The Roanoke River enabled ships of considerable size to navigate its waters as far upstream as Williamston before there were any roads other than the few that followed the winding Indian trails. Being the seat of government necessarily brought most of the residents of the county to Williamston sooner or later for recording legal documents, for their attendance at court sessions as litigants, jurors, witnesses, or in other capacities, and also for military musters, elections, and similar functions.

As time went on, the town became known for the other facilities and conveniences it offered to the people of the section. Having a public landing, it was automatically an important shipping point for river freight traffic, both incoming and outgoing. Later, the railroad came, resulting in increased commerce by rail and water. Moving into the present century, with the bridging of the river at the eastern edge of the city limits in 1922, Williamston became the hub of a system of major highways and roads upon which the business and commercial life of the county now largely depends.

All three methods of transportation are widely used to this day. There is considerable river traffic in wood products, fertilizer materials, oils and lubricants. The rail lines handle tremendous amounts of pulpwood, farming machinery and like heavy equipment, as well as carload lots of a variety of freight items. The highways serve eight major trucking lines which provide door-to-door freight pickup and delivery service in Williamston on a daily basis, as well as the farm, industrial firm, and independent trucking line vehicles and thousands of private and public passenger cars and buses that use them constantly.

Landowners and planters, for the most part, constituted the leadership of the new town at the time it was established, and this continued to be true for some time afterwards. As the community expanded, it attracted people in other occupations, trades, and professions, and they began to take their places in the civic, religious, and commercial life of the region. The better educated, as a rule, gravitated toward top positions of power and trust in all phases of local government. Some of them may have been self-taught and a few had little formal education, but all had enough native ability and common sense to attain positions of leadership. However, a substantial number of the leaders came from the ranks of the lawyers, physicians, ministers, and like members of the various professions which required at least elements of academic learning, even in those earlier days.

Some information about Williamston in 1860 may be gained from an article which appeared in the Williamston Enterprise on November 14, 1902, written by Miss Hattie Thrower, a well-known local writer for the newspaper at that time. The western limit of the town in 1860, she wrote, went no farther than present-day Elm Street. Main Street came to a dead end at that point, two posts in the middle of the street blocking passage. People heading west then turned to the left and went south by Skewarkey before turning right and on to Everetts and Robersonville.

Business houses usually were of small dimensions about that period. The store building owned by Elder C. B. Hassell, located at the intersection of Main and Smithwick Streets, a three-story structure, was the largest. The only brick buliding was on the lot later owned by N. S. Peel on the north side of what is now the 100 block of West Main Street. It was occupied by the general mercantile store of John C. Lamb, who later raised the first company of county volunteers for the Confederacy. He was promoted to colonel of the 17th North Carolina Regiment, took part in a number of major battle actions, and was fatally wounded in or near Bermuda Hundreds, Va., in the closing days of the Civil War.Other leading merchants of the 1860's in Williamston included Ameleck Williams, Docton W. Bagley, Capt. John Lanier, and W. H. Carstarphen.

Merchants of those days made frequent buying trips to New York, driving or taking a boat to Plymouth, changing to a steamer from there to Franklin, Va., then going by rail the remainder of the way. Their purchases were brought in by sailing vessels and steamboats, which usually returned north laden with shingles and naval stores. Three of the vessels best known for these trips to Williamston around 1860 were the "Alice Gibson," owned by Henry P. Gibson; and "Martha Moore" and Coenine," owned by Messrs. F. and G. Moore. It was said the latter two ships were built at a boatyard on the Bertie shore about a mile above the Williamston public wharf. Two steamships made almost daily trips on the river, the "John G. Styles," commanded by Captain Moore, and the "Alice of Windsor," master of which was Capt. Lafayette Thrower. There was some trade with the West Indies, cargoes of salt and molasses being exchanged for lumber, tar, pitch, and turpentine.

The courthouse and jail, which had been moved from an earlier period to just above the brink of the "river hill," was northeast of the center of the town. Members of the local bar in 1860 included Jesse Stubbs, William Eborn, Asa Biggs, and Col. Joseph G. Caraway. Patrick Winston of Windsor and Judge Henry Gilliam of Edenton were among the more prominent lawyers from other counties who practiced in the courts at Williamston at that time.

Just prior to the Civil War there were only two churches in the town; Episcopal and Methodist. A large number of Williamston people were Primitive Baptists and worshipped at Skewarkey. The Rev. Alfred Watson, later to become bishop of the Diocese of East Carolina, was rector of the Episcopal church. He lived in Plymouth and was said to have walked the entire distance between the towns on occasion. The Methodist minister in 1860 was the Rev. Mr. Chaffin, and Elder C. B. Hassell was pastor of Skewarkey Primitive Baptist Church.

Bishop Francis Asbury, famed Methodist minister of the early church in this century, made at least six visits to Williamston in the late 1700's and early 1800's. He wrote in his diary that he came to Williamston on February 23, 1803, riding from Washington, "22 miles on horseback," and noting that this was his first visit to the town since January, 1792. He said there were about 20 families and 40 buildings in the town when he was here in 1803.

Williamston had two schools in 1860. The Male Academy was located about where Church Street Elementary School now stands, and the Female Academy was on the west side of South Watts Street in what later was known as the Alexander Smith home. Both were private schools, as there were very few public schools, and the teachers generally were men or nothern women, many considering it beneath the dignity of southern women to work outside their homes at that time. In addition to the basic subjects, boys studied Greek and Latin to prepare themselves for further studies at the state university or other colleges, while girls who sought additional education, for the most part, usually went to Salem, Greensboro, Raleigh or Murfreesboro.

Before he became a member of the Williamston board of commissioners in 1861, Elder C. B. Hassell early in 1857 laid off a tract of land owned by him adjacent to the city limits on the west for what he called a new "town" (similar to real estate subdivisions of today), which was named "Elmington" by P. G. Foster. The land originally had been purchased by Hassell in partnership with George R. Clements and Henry Williams from Jeremiah G. Respass, but Hassell evidently had acquired complete ownership later, as he does not mention the two partners later in connection with the sale of lots there.

Under the date of February 2, 1857, Hassell wrote that he was having a survey made of the field, which adjoined his premises, leaving two whole squares from Sixth (now Smithwick) Street, including the Hassell residence, and name the first cross street "Elmington" (now Elm) in the new town. Hassell extended the Williamston east-west streets through his new development and then laid off cross streets at intervals of 140 yards to correspond with the distance between similar cross streets in Williamston. The long or leading streets were to be made 66 feet wide; and all the cross streets were to be 45 feet wide except Elmington, which also was to be 66 feet wide. His surveyor on this occasion was James A. Nelson and the chain bearers were Samuel L. Gleason and Wm. J. Riddick.

On February 5 Hassell notes in his diary that he "spent this day running around the Respass land and extending Main Street into it near the upper line." On February 13 he sold the first lots in Elmington, writing that Dr. Lewis Warrock purchased the first and second that were sold and that he was "given credit for being the pioneer." Later in the year 1857, on November 13, he made the notation that he "had sold Warrock two lots of land in Elmington, and on correct survey he found that they were not there. He (Hassell), by William Hardison, this day made a tender of the money back to Dr. Warrock and he eventually took it."

The final note about Elmington made by Elder Hassell came on February 19, 1859, with the entry: "The (N.C.) legislature has just passed a bill before its adjournment (on January 17) extending the town limits of Williamston very considerably, taking into town two squares of 'Elmington' which belonged to H (Hassell), with some little exception. Such a measure would increase H's taxes very considerably, but would bring his lots more directly into market."

Williamston has had several devastating fires during the course of its nearly 200 year history. Probably the greatest occurred on December 8, 1883, when a sizable portion of the business section was completely destroyed. According to a newspaper account, the fire started in a store on the north side of Main Street just east of where the Branch Banking & Trust Company buliding is now located and swept on down, jumping to the south side and consuming a total of 15 stores, the post office, and an oyster stand before burning out at the Smithwick Street intersection. A conservative estimate of the damage was said to be more than $80,000, with about $17,260 in insurance. Eleven of the twenty property owners who suffered losses had no insurance at all, and only a few had anything like adequate coverage.

The fire was big news throughout the section, and the railroad company ran a special excursion from Tarboro to Williamston the following Sunday for spectators to view the ruins. Adding to the excitement, the steamer "Commerce" caught fire at its dock on the river at the same time the fire was raging uptown and had to be cut loose and allowed to drift downstream until she sank. General comment was that it was truly "A Hot Time in the Old Town" that night.

Although it may not have been as large as the one in 1883 in number of buildings destroyed and dollar value of the loss, another fire a little more than a year later, on December 14, 1884, which destroyed the county's second courthouse, could have been of considerably more historical significance. It consumed many of the priceless official records and reports of various boards and commissions, especially those of the Revolutionary and Civil War periods. This has made it impossible to obtain many facts about various phases of life in the county which would be of major importance to those interested in history.

The act which incorporated Williamston, as passed by the state assembly in 1779, appointed six commissioners or trustees to handle the government of the new town, specifying no length of term for their office and no mention being made of a mayor or other executive officer. They were authorized to meet as often as considered necessary and empowered to nominate their own successors in cases of death or resignation, making it a self-perpetuating body.

The first six men appointed commissioners were Samuel Williams, Thomas Hunter, Samuel Smithwick, William Slade, Edward Smithwick, and John Griffin. There are no records about their meetings or proceedings, and it is not known how long they served or who were selected as their successors. About the only official records for more than a hundred years after the town was established are acts amending the original charter, some of which mention names of commissioners at the time amendments were made, but a majority of which do not. There are a few brief scattered newspaper accounts and occasional diary or other personal references about elections or other major happenings in the municipality between 1799 and 1901, but for the most part, the town government's recorded history during that period is simply non-existent.

An amendment of December 2, 1842, changed the original act of incorporation to reduce the number of commissioners from six to five, set their terms at one year each, and designated the last Monday in December of each calendar year as election day. There was no reference to the office of mayor, but there was a provision giving the "chairman of the board of commissioners" certain powers similar to those exercised by the town's chief officer in later years. Names of the commissioners were not given in this act.

A little more than six years later, on January 27, 1849, an act was adopted in the state assembly ratifying and validating two deeds entered into by the Williamston Board of Commissioners on July 23, 1847, one conveying "the old burying grounds" to Cushing B. Hassell by the board; and the other, from Gavin Lanier to the commissioners, for a new burying ground. The latter transaction was probably the start of the present "Woodlawn" municipal cemetery; while the first gave Elder Hassell title to an old public burying ground—located about the present intersection of Hassell Street and Simmons Avenue—which had been originally part of the land he had acquired in Williamston. Town commissioners in 1847, as recorded in the act, were Henry

Williams, D. W. Bagley, Dr. Levi S. Yates, John Watts, and George Hobbs.

It was not until February 16, 1859, that the office of mayor was established, the act amending the charter to provide "That at the next regular election for commissioners the qualified voters of said town may, in like manner and for the same time as the commissioners are elected, elect a mayor who shall be a resident of the town, and shall exercise all the power and jurisdiction conferred on similar officers of incorporated towns...."

Elder C. B. Hassell's diary records that on December 26, 1859, an election for mayor and commissioners of Williamston for the ensuing year resulted in the choice of H. B. Smithwick for mayor and the following for commissioners: John R. Lanier, William W. Ward, Joseph Knight, Samuel Hatton and Samuel W. Watts. According to this, H. B. Smithwick was the first to be elected mayor since the town was incorporated nearly 80 years previously. He retained the office for a number of years; exactly how long has not been determined, but there is a record that he was reelected for 1861, and the next report of anyone else holding the office is in a Tarboro Southerner article of January 13, 1870, stating that W. P. Williams had been elected Williamston mayor for that year.

Elder C. B. Hassell served the town in a number of official capacities prior to and during the early days of the Civil War. A note in his diary says that he, along with F. W. Moore and William W. Ward, after having been appointed by the town commissioners, met on July 7, 1859, to assess the value of real estate of Williamston, "both old and new town." For many years, "New Town" generally has been considered to be that portion of Williamston on the south side of the east-west ravine which runs parallel with the railroad track from above Smithwick Street to the river. Hassell reported "the whole amount of the (land) valuation about $125,000—'New Town' (accounting for) about $50,000 of it."

On January 1, 1861, Hassell was sworn in as a member of the board of commissioners, along with A. C. Williams, John R. Lanier, P. G. Foster and McGilvary M. Staton. H. B. Smithwick was again mayor. A public meeting was held in the courthouse the following week, on January 9, 1861, at which the commissioners presented recommendations for policing the town during the year. The Hassell diary says "the same (were) unanimously approved with the exception of one vote—John A. Cherry, who voted 'No.' "

Evidently the policing proposed was to be done on a voluntary basis, as the Hassell diary for the following day says he, as captain, "and

Zachary Eborn, Abner Williams, and James F. Whitaker, as town guards, went out on service and returned home after 12 o'clock at night." The officials had appointed 14 squads of four men each . .to patrol the town, and Hassell said he had taken the lead and "would have to turn out every two weeks." Another notation about his service as town commissioner says that on April 10, 1861, he attended a meeting at which the board asked for and received legal advice about the propriety of abating the nuisance of a bagatelle table being operated in the town, "at which Albert Duggan came near killing John L. Leggett the day before."

A little later in 1861 Jesse R. Stubbs, prominent attorney, was elected commissioner to succeed the deceased McGilvary M. Staton. On May 23, 1861, it is recorded that "at a meeting of the commissioners of Williamston . . . a vigilance committee for the district" was appointed, but there are no reports of the territory included in the "district" or actions taken by the committee. The final entry concerning Elder Hassell's service as a town official appears under the date of December 30, 1861, when it was recorded that he was reelected for 1862, along with all the other commissioners except John R. Lanier, who was then captain of the militia company. Joseph J. Martin was elected as successor to Lanier.

The corporate limits of the town of Williamston did not go as far as the Roanoke River until February 22, 1901, when a special act by the General Assembly extended the northeastern boundary to that stream. However, in the act of February 16, 1859, provision was made for a right of way 60 feet wide from the southeastern limits of the town to the river. On November 11, 1856, there is an entry in the diary of Docton W. Bagley that "Commissioners of Williamston Landing" at that time were W. J. Ellison, McGilvary M. Staton, and J. S. Yarrell.

An unidentified entry from a diary—possibly of Elder C. B. Hassell's—reported that on September 9, 1868, Williamston had "a new board of Radical commissioners." John L. Knight was mayor. This was the same year that "Radicals," as Republicans were then called, won a majority of county and state offices in the general election.

There is very little information to be found about officials or affairs of the town of Williamston following the start of the Civil War until after the turn of the century, when files of The Enterprise take up the story. The Tarboro Southerner of January 13, 1870, reported the following Williamston officials had taken office for that year: W. P. Williams, mayor; Gideon Lamb, J. M. Sitterson, J. H. Hatton, W. H. Carstarphen, and Augustus Johnson, commissioners. Johnson was a highly respected colored citizen who served several terms as commissioner, having been elected again in May, 1877, when the Southerner reported on another town election. J. Dawson Biggs was elected mayor in that election and the commissioners were Walter Hassell, W. T. Crawford, Dr. Joshua Taylor, W. H. T. Biggs, and "Gus" Johnson. The item concluded "There were two tickets in the field and no little excitement." Names of those on the other ticket were not mentioned.

An act of the General Assembly of March 11, 1885, consolidating previous acts relative to the town of Williamston, lists J. L. Ewell as mayor at that time and the following as commissioners: W. H. Harrell, W. H. Roberson, Sr., B. F. Godwin, S. S. Brown, and C. D. Carstarphen. A little later the same year, May 7, 1885, the Tarboro Southerner reported Wheeler Martin had been elected mayor along with the following commissioners: D. D. Simmons, S. R. Biggs, J. W. Davenport, John Thrower, and a colored man named Long, initials or first name not known.

A year book for 1890 shows that Wheeler Martin was mayor and the commissioners were J. H. Thrower, B. F. Godwin, Dennis Simmons, William Slade, and Augustus Johnson. Rounding out names of Williamston officials who served prior to the present century, an unidentified source lists Alexander H. Smith as mayor in 1894 and the following as commissioners: W. A. Ellison, Wheeler Martin, Sr., J. D. Leggett, Eli Gurganus, and B. S. Spruill. At the same time A. Anderson was town clerk and William Anderson was constable.

William H. Roberson, who died in 1922, evidently served as mayor for some years prior to 1900, although it has not been established exactly when. His obituary, published in The Enterprise, reported that he died on January 23, 1922, at the age of 83 years, and that he had served three terms as mayor of Williamston, as well as a justice of the peace for 40 years. The record of mayors since 1900 is fairly complete, and he is not listed among them, so he must have served prior to that time. There are records showing that Roberson was a member of the board of town commissioners in 1885 and 1901.

During the first 74 years of the 20th century, eight men have been elected to the office of mayor of the town of Williamston, and several others served temporarily or completed unexpired terms of those who had been elected. J. L. Ewell was elected in 1901 and again in 1905, but it is not exactly clear when he was in and out of the office during that time. Ed F. Huffines was elected in 1903, presumably for a two-year term, but there is a notation in some of the records that Ewell was "reelected" in 1905, so it is possible he may have served out part of Huffines' term. A year book for 1906 says B. F. Godwin, Sr., was mayor at that time, and he continued in the office until 1921, a period of 15 years.

Following Godwin, Dr. John D. Bigs was elected mayor in 1921, but resigned within a month, and Elbert S. Peel was appointed to succeed him. Peel continued in the office until December 1, 1922, when he resigned to accept the office of county solicitor. S. R. Biggs, a member of the board of commissioners, then served as mayor pro tempore until February of the following year, when Hugh G. Horton agreed to serve the remaining portion of the unexpired term.

John L. Hassell was elected to the office in 1923 and served one term before giving way to Robert L. Coburn in 1925. Coburn continued as mayor for eight years, Hassell returning to the office in 1933 and being reelected six times before he retired in 1947. Robert H. Cowen was elected in 1947 and retained the position almost ten yeras, resigning February 4, 1957, to begin his duties as state senator from the Second District, to which office he had been elected the preceding year.

Mayor Cowen's resignation in 1957 was a contribution to one of the most remarkable records of continuous public service in the annals of municipal government. The town board at that time elected Commissioner N. C. Green to fill the vacated office of mayor, and he held it through 1974 without interruption. Before becoming mayor, Green had served as a member of the board of commissioners for nearly 28 years; and in 1974 the combined record of his service as commissioner and mayor passed the 45-year mark. Although early history of the town is obscure, and the written records are not complete, it is believed there is nothing comparable to this tenure during the 200 years since the town was chartered in November, 1779.

There are also some other outstanding records of lengthy service to the town, obtained principally from minutes and newspaper reports of proceedings of the commissioners. Generally the records were made during the present century, since information is more readily available covering this period, but a few started in the 1800's and came up into the early 1900's. B. F. Godwin, for instance, not only served as mayor for about 15 years between 1906 and 1921, but he was also known to have been a member of the board of commissioners during the past century, definitely in 1885 and 1890 and very probably in other years around that time. J. L. Ewell, who was mayor for several terms in the early part of this century, is also known to have held that office in 1885, and it is considered very likely that he was a member of the board of commissioners or mayor in other years prior to 1900.

According to available records, George H. Harrison was a member of the board of town commissioners for nearly 28 years, longer than anyone else except his nephew, Commissioner and later Mayor Green. Due to an unsuaul combination of circumstances, the actual difference between the length of their services as commissioners was exactly one month and 15 days. They were together on the same boards for nearly 20 years, from June, 1929, until January, 1949. Harrison was sworn in on June 6, 1921, and remained on the board continuously until his death on January 27, 1949, a period of 27 years, six months and 16 days; while Green became a commissioner on June 3, 1929, and continued until elevated to the position of mayor on February 4, 1957, his membership on the board covering 27 years, eight months and one day.

Names of other town commissioners who have served six years (three full terms) or more since 1900, some not continuously, and the year in which they first assumed duties of the office, are as follows: L. P. Lindsley, 20 years, 1927; George W. Corey, 19 years, 1955; W. T. Meadows, 16 years, 1939; V. D. Godwin, 14 years, 1933; H. L. Barnhill, 14 years, 1949; Thurman C. Perry, 13 years, 1961; M. Luther Peele, 12 years, 1931; W. O. Griffin, 12 years, 1949; C. H. Godwin, 10 years, 1905; C. O. Moore, 10 years, 1917; W. Marvin Baker, 10 years, 1955; R. A. Critcher, Jr., over 9 years, 1957; George C. Griffin, Jr., 9 years, 1965; K. D. Worrell, 8 years, 1947; Noah S. Peel, 6 years, 1903; F. K. Hodges, 6 years, 1903; Dr. John D. Biggs, 6 years, 1903; J. G. Staton, 6 years, 1909; W. Henry Crawford, 6 years, 1909; Leslie T. Fowden, 6 years, 1915. A few others have been elected for three terms, but failed to complete the six years for one reason or another; and some appointed to fill out unexpired terms and then elected several times did not complete three full terms. In 1973 the time for the municipal election was changed from May to November, and the terms of office of town officials now begin in December instead of June, as formerly.

Names of those elected mayor and commissioners of the town of Williamston, starting with 1901, are as follows:

1901: J. L. Ewell, mayor; W. H. Robertson, Sr., C. W. Keith, C. D. Carstarphen, T. C. Cooke, Latham Thrower; 1903: Ed F. Huffines, mayor; Dr. John D. Biggs, Dr. J. B. H. Knight, N. S. Peel, F. K. Hodges, A. Hassell; 1905: J. L. Ewell, mayor; James D. Leggett, Charles H. Godwin, William A. Ellison, Noah S. Peel, Arthur Anderson;

1907: B. F. Godwin, mayor; John D. Biggs, W. A. Ellison, S. S. Brown, N. S. Peel, C. H. Godwin; 1909: B. F. Godwin, mayor; James R. Robertson, Charles H. Godwin, James G. Staton, Alonzo Hassell, W. Henry Crawford; 1911: B. F. Godwin, mayor; Arthur Anderson, John D. Biggs, C. H. Godwin, G. W. Blount, W. H. Crawford. An interesting

note about the 1911 election is that three persons tied in number of votes for fifth commissioner, W. H. Crawford, J. R. Robertson and L. B. Harrison. Their names were placed in a hat, and a blindfolded youth drew out the name of W. H. Crawford, who was then declared elected.

1913: B. F. Godwin, mayor; C. H. Godwin, W. T. Meadows, W. H. Crawford, A. R. Dunning, F. K. Hodges; 1915: B. F. Godwin; W. T. Meadows, F. K. Hodges, Leslie T. Fowden, J. R. Robertson, W. H. Crawford; 1917: B. F. Godwin, mayor; C. O. Moore, W. T. Meadows, Leslie T. Fowden, G. W. Blount, J. G. Staton;

1919: B. F. Godwin, mayor; J. G. Staton, W. T. Meadows, G. W. Blount, C. O. Moore, Leslie Fowden; 1921: Dr. John D. Biggs, mayor; George H. Harrison, Alonzo Hassell, B. S. Courtney, S. R. Biggs, W. T. Meadows; 1923: John L. Hassell, mayor; Geo. H. Harrison, W. J. Hodges (resigned July 1, 1923; replaced by John S. Rogerson), Dr. P. B. Cone, J. D. Woolard, C. B. Clark;

1925: R. L. Coburn, mayor; W. T. Meadows, C. O. Moore, G. H. Harrison, E. P. Cunningham, C. B. Hassell; 1927: R. L. Coburn, mayor; C. O. Moore, G. H. Harrison, E. P. Cunningham, L. P. Lindsley, W. T. Meadows; 1929: R. L. Coburn, mayor; N. C. Green, W. T. Meadows, G. H. Harrison, L. P. Lindsley, C. O. Moore;

1931: R. L. Coburn, mayor; N. C. Green, L. P. Lindsley, G. H. Harrison, E. S. McCabe, M. Luther Peel; 1933: John L. Hassell, mayor; L. P. Lindsley, V. D. Godwin, N. C. Green, Luther Peel, G. H. Harrison; 1935: J. L. Hassell, mayor; N. C. Green, L.P. Lindsley, G. H. Harrison, Luther Peel, V. D. Godwin;

1937: John L. Hassell, mayor; G. H. Harrison, Luther Peel, N. C. Green, V. D. Godwin, L. P. Lindsley; 1939: John L. Hassell, mayor; N. C. Green, L. P. Lindsley, G. H. Harrison, V. D. Godwin, Luther Peel; 1941: John L. Hassell, mayor; L. P. Lindsley, G. H. Harrison, V. D. Godwin, N. C. Green, Luther Peel (Peel resigned December 1, 1941, to accept the post of county tax collector and the post was later filled by appointment of Roy T. Griffin);

1943: John L. Hassell, mayor; G. H. Harrison, N. C. Green, L. P. Lindsley, V. D. Godwin, Roy T. Griffin; 1945: J. L. Hassell, mayor; G. H. Harrison, L. P. Lindsley, N. C. Green, V. D. Godwin, Roy T. Griffin. It was noted at this meeting that Mayor Hassell was beginning his thirteenth year without having missed a meeting of the board; that Harrison was starting his 14th term, Lindsley his 11th term, Green his 10th term, Godwin his 7th term and Griffin his 3rd term. 1947: Robert H. Cowen, mayor; K. D. Worrell, Ben D. Courtney, N. C. Green, John H. Gurganus, G. H. Harrison;

1949: Robert H. Cowen, mayor; N. C. Green, K. D. Worrell, W. O. Griffin, David Moore, H. Leman Barnhill; 1951: Robert H. Cowen, mayor; David Moore, N. C. Green, K. D. Worrell, W. O. Griffin, H. L. Barnhill; 1953: Robert H. Cowen, mayor; H. L. Barnhill, N. C. Green, W. O. Griffin, David Moore, K. D. Worrell; 1955: Robert H. Cowen, mayor (resigned February 4, 1957, to become state senator; same date, succeeded as mayor by Commissioner N. C. Green, and Green's place on board filled by appointment of Roger A. Critcher, Jr.); W. Marvin Baker, H. L. Barnhill, George W. Corey, N. C. Green, W. O. Griffin;

1957: N. C. Green, mayor; R. A. Critcher, Jr., W. Marvin Baker, Geo. W. Corey, H. Leman Barnhill, W. O. Griffin; 1959: N. C. Green, mayor; H. L. Barnhill, W. Marvin Baker, George W. Corey, R. A. Critcher, Jr., W. O. Griffin; 1961: N. C. Green mayor; M. W. Baker, H. L. Barnhill, George W. Corey, Laurence E. Lilley, Thurman C. Perry;

1963: N. C. Green, mayor; W. M. Baker, Thurman C. Perry, H. L. Barnhill, Laurence E. Lilley, Geo. W. Corey; 1965: N. C. Green, mayor; Thurman C. Perry, Geo. C. Griffin, Jr., R. A. Critcher, Jr., Geo. W. Corey, Laurence E. Lilley (resigned December 1, 1965, account of health, vacancy filled by appointment of H. P. Mobley); 1967: N. C. Green, mayor; Thurman C. Perry, Geo. C. Griffin, Jr., R. A. Critcher, Jr., Geo. W. Corey, H. P. Mobley;

1969: N. C. Green, mayor; Geo. C. Griffin, Jr., Thurman C. Perry, H. P. Mobley, Geo. W. Corey, R. A. Critcher, Jr. (resigned November 1, 1970, to accept position with state, vacancy filled by appointment of Wilbur D. Edwards); 1971: N. C. Green, mayor; G. W. Corey, Robert B. Godard, T. C. Perry, G. C. Griffin, Jr., W. D. Edwards.

Pursuant to provisions of an enabling act of the 1973 General Assembly, the Williamston Board of Commissioners met on April 20, 1973, and voted for major changes in the time, manner and method of electing municipal officials. The time was changed from May to Tuesday after the first Monday in November of odd-numbered years, and the manner and method from partisan primaries and election to a non-partisan plurality election which eliminates primaries. Terms of office of the mayor and members of the board of commissioners now begin at the first meeting in December after their election, instead of at the regular meeting in June after election as was formerly the case.

The first election under the new plan was held on November 6, 1973, resulting in reelection of all the former officers: N. C. Green, mayor; Geo. C. Griffin, Jr., Thurman C. Perry, Robert B. Godard, Geo. W. Corey and Wilbur D. Edwards. They assumed the duties of their offices in January, 1974, and their terms are due to run through November 1975.

Although its boundaries did not extend all the way to Roanoke River when Williamston was chartered in 1779, its early importance as a town was due almost entirely to its proximity to that stream, plus being the county seat of Martin, established five years previously. The first courthouse was said to have been a rather crude wooden structure on stilts located well below the fairly steep "river hill." It was built high enough above the ground to permit vehicles to be driven under it during inclement weather, and there were also booths for the sale of candy, gingerbread, oysters, and similar food items. Other business establishments were located in the vicinity of the courthouse. The courtroom was reached by ladder-like steps, which were sometimes drawn up after court was in session, with no one permitted to enter or leave during the proceedings.

There is no record of what happened to the original courthouse or when the second one was bulit. It also was an old-fashioned wooden structure, located on the north side of Main Street above the brink of the river hill, the business district of the town having started its westward move probably around the latter part of the 18th century. The second courthouse was burned in December, 1884, quite a number of important county records being destroyed. Some were saved, including many of the books in the office of the clerk of superior court.

At the April, 1885, meeting of the county board of commissioners, a committee was named and authorized to issue bonds in the amount of $14,600 for construction of what has become the main part of the present courthouse. The building committee was composed of John D. Biggs, Sr., William Slade, Marion Burroughs, Dr. U. S. Hassell, and James Augustus Whitley. County commissioners at the time were Joseph D. Biggs, S. L. Wallace, W. R. Mangum, B. R. Jenkins, and W. A. Haislip. The board ordered a special tax levy of 10 cents on each $100 in property valuation, plus 30 cents poll, to finance the bonds and other buliding costs.

J. T. Barnes of Wilson was awarded the contract for construction of the courthouse for $15,000, and J. H. Thrower was superintendent of the actual work. It was a solid brick structure, 55 by 85 feet, with five officers on the first floor, plus vaults for the clerk of court and register of deeds. The court room on the second floor had seats for spectators sloping toward a level space for the bar and an elevated judge's stand. No mention was made then of the jail, and it likely was built later back of the main building. There was no running water or plumbing in the courthouse, and the "necessary" was located over a ditch at the rear of the lot. Total cost of the entire project, including furniture and an iron fence, was $17,353.98.

There is no record as to who was the first policeman for the town of Williamston or when such an office was established. It is quite probable that whatever law enforcement duties were required during the earlier days of the municipality were handled by the township constable. First mention of a police organization was that noted by Town Commissioner C. B. Hassell in 1861, when a voluntary force of 14 teams of four men each was set up to patrol the town at night during the unsettled conditions prevailing just before the start of the Civil War. He and three others made the first voluntary rounds on the night of April 10, 1861, returning home after midnight.

Until relatively recent years, the collection of municipal property and license taxes was one of the principal duties of policemen in practically all of the towns in this section. Yearbooks for the period immediately prior to and around the start of the present century sometimes listed these officers with different titles, including tax collector, chief of police, and also as constable. In 1896 J. W. Watts was constable in Williamston; in 1902 it was recorded that S. W. Harrell was tax collector, and T. J. Latham was recorded as tax collector in 1904. The first mention of police chief appears in the 1905 yearbook, J. H. Page having that title then. He continued as chief until 1910, also being listed as township constable in 1908, and he served as county sheriff some years after 1915.

In 1910, W. R. White was appointed chief of police and in August, 1911, he was shot to death by an alleged bootlegger. His assailant was captured, convicted on circumstantial evidence, since there were no eyewitnesses, and executed the following year, reportedly the first man to die by electrocution in the state after hanging had been abolished as the official method of execution.

J. H. Ward became chief of police in 1912 and was followed in 1916 by E. A. Edwards. He held the office only about a year before being succeeded in 1917 by C. F. Page, brother of the former chief, J. H. Page. C. F. Page continued in the office until he suffered a stroke in July, 1923, and J. O. Manning entered upon the duties in August of that year, remaining there until 1926. W. B. Daniel was appointed in 1926 and held the office longer than any other man on record, until his death in 1944.

In the 30 years since 1944, Williamston has had seven different men at the head of the police department, several of whom served on more than one occasion. Charles R. Mobley was appointed in 1944; W. T.

Simpson succeeded him in 1947 and was followed in 1948 by a former member of the State Highway Patrol, W. E. Saunders. Saunders left in 1949, and John R. Roebuck, a member of the department, was promoted to acting chief and handled the job, with the exception of one brief break in 1955, for about eight years, until Thomas A. Conway assumed the office in 1957, Roebuck returning to his old job as assistant chief.

It was about this time that a milestone was reached by the appointment of Brad Bagley in July, 1957, as the first black to become a permanent member of the police force. Several had been employed as policemen on a temporary basis for special duty at various times prior to this, but Bagley was the first to become a full-time permanent policeman. He has since attained the rank of sergeant, one of three in the department.

Conway continued as head of the police force until February, 1959, when he resigned, Jack Jernigan serving as acting chief until Lloyd Banks was appointed later the same year. Banks resigned in November, 1966, and John L. Swain was promoted from lieutenant to chief and has headed the department since that time.

When Chief Swain joined the police force in 1960, he became its eighth member. Since then the department has grown and expanded steadily, in 1974 numbering 20 members when fully staffed, including at that time one female officer, one black sergeant and two black patrolmen. The department is equipped to do its own photography and much of its laboratory work. An investigative office was established in 1963 and now has three especially trained men assigned to it. All members of the force have had training in various phases of crime apprehension, detection and investigative work through attendance upon classes conducted at technical institutes and regional police academies. The department now operates seven vehicles, including one mobile unit equipped for laboratory and photographic work.

In connection with its work in the field of crime prevention, the Williamston Police Club was organized in recent years to sponsor and provide leadership for a juvenile recreational and athletics program available to young people throughout the entire county. The club manages and operates a clubhouse and well-lighted athletic field, located at the eastern edge of the town. The program of activities is designed primarily to appeal to underprivileged youth and to provide recreational and playground facilities which otherwise would not be available to them. Funds for lease of the property and operation of the program are provided on a matching basis by town, county, state, and federal governments.

Plans were being developed in the fall of 1974 for making the Williamston Police Department the center for a county-wide communications system, which was expected to be put into operation in 1975. This was designed to correlate all calls to law enforcement, fire, and rescue units in the county, routing them through one central agency, enabling joint action to be taken where and when necessary to meet any emergency situation that may develop. It would also eliminate unnecessary duplication of efforts in those cases where several calls may be received by different units concerning the same occurrence.

Another adjunct of the government of Williamston which has had considerable growth over the years is the fire department. First mention of organized fire-fighting efforts to be found in available records of the town is contained in a newspaper article concerning the big fire in Williamston on the night of December 8, 1883. The Tarboro Southerner, in its issue of December 13, 1883, reporting on the fire, said: "People rushed to the scene, each bent on doing something to prevent a conflagration, each acknowledging no authority but his own, and at first most of the efforts were misdirected. Soon, however, James Edwin Moore was made chief of the fire brigade, and then began a battle with the flames, which was manfully kept up until the fire was under control...." Thus it can be said that James Edwin Moore, a prominent attorney at that time, was the first fire chief of Williamston, though his title was bestowed for the immediate occasion and probably did not apply afterwards.

Before the first City Hall was erected in 1908, fire alarms usually were sounded by the ringing of church bells. There is a notation in some of the old records that in the 1870's the Methodist church and old hotel bells were rung in case of fire. It was also noted that bells on the old Burroughs and Salsbury farms southeast of Williamston were rung to mark the noon hour each day. The Salsbury place is now known as the Marshall Wilson farm, and the old Burroughs farm home was about where Park Apartments are now located.

It has been impossible to determine just when the first volunteer fire company was organized in Williamston, but it is generally believed it was around 1907 or 1908 and that Kader B. Crawford was the first man to be elected chief of the permanent organization. At that time the equipment consisted of a chemical tank mounted on a two-wheel cart arrangement and a four-wheel pumper wagon. Both were drawn by hand and manually operated, the pumper by a double-lever mechanism which enabled three or four men on each side to operate it. Water had to be obtained from wells, streams or ponds.

The fire company was completely reorganized on May 3, 1921, shortly after the town's water system was completed. Kader B. Crawford was again reelected chief, and Jesse T. Price was made secretary and treasurer. The department, entirely volunteer in nature, was divided into three companies, each with a captain and a lieutenant. The following comprised the three companies at that time:

Hook and ladder company: Kader Rogerson, captain; J. W. Ward, lieutenant; Henry Harrison, Jim Leggett, S. Collin Peel, S. R. Biggs, John L. Rodgerson, John A. Manning, J. C. Anderson, D. E. Gurganus, Richard Smith, Titus Critcher and Thomas Cox;

Chemical engine company: John S. Cooke, captain; Leslie Fowden, lieutenant; Joseph L. Godard, Jr., Herbert Ward, Louis C. Bennett, Jack W. Biggs, Charles R. Mobley, Noah S. Godard and John D. Ward, Jr.;

Hose company: John W. Manning, captain; C. A. Harrison, lieutenant; Dr. P. B. Cone, Roy T. Griffin, George N. Gurganus, Wheeler Martin, George H. Harrison, W. C. Manning, Sr., C. D. Carstarphen, Jr., Warren H. Biggs, Jack W. Hunter, Theodore Roberson, Octavius Manning, John R. Browning, E. S. Peel and N. C. Green.

It was along about this time or shortly afterwards that the first piece of motorized equipment was ordered for the department. It was a Model T Ford truck, painted a fire engine red and equipped to carry hose and several hand-operated extinguishers. The truck was completed about the time the North Carolina State Fair was held that year in Raleigh, and the manufacturer sent it there for exhibition before delivering it to the Williamston authorities. It made its first news at that time, one of the Capital City newspapers having the following item about it: "Mrs. (Edith) Vanderbilt, president of the State Fair, and her daughter, Cornelia, christened the new fire truck of the Williamston Fire Department. The truck was at the State Fair on exhibition, and on Friday morning Mrs. Vanderbilt left her silver-blue Packard, mounted the fiery red firefighter, with Deputy State Fire Marshal Sherwood Brockwell at the wheel, and rode twice around the race track at the fair grounds, taking the turns on two wheels without a tremor."

Kader B. Crawford resigned as fire chief shortly after the department was reorganized in 1921, and he was succeeded by Henry D. Harrison about the time the first motorized hose truck was received in 1921. The town received its first powered pumper in 1928, an

American-LaFrance truck which is now considered a museum piece and turns out only on ceremonial occasions, although it is still in fairly good operating condition. After many years of service, the Model T Ford hose truck was sold and used for some time on a farm in the county. In the autumn of 1974, the department had four pieces of equipment in operation, plus the chief's car. Three of the units carried about 500 gallons of water each for use on fires where hydrants were not available, and there was a 1,600-gallon tanker on order, with delivery scheduled in 1975.

Under rules of the reorganized volunteer department, for the past half century the firemen themselves elected their own chief, subject to approval of the board of town commissioners, actual appointment being made by the latter. After becoming chief in 1921, Henry D. Harrison held the office for about 16 years, until January, 1937, when he was succeeded by George A. Harris. He resigned a little over a year later, due to pressure of his private business, and G. P. Hall was elected, starting the longest tenure of anyone who ever held the office on September 5, 1938, and continuing until September 1, 1960, a period of just about 22 years, leaving because of ill health. Morris Stalls then became chief and served for nearly ten years, resigning in May 1971, when he was succeeded by James W. Thrower. After holding the office for a little over a year, Thrower resigned and was succeeded by Thomas E. Price, who continues to head the department and is the first full-time professional firemen to become chief.

In order to qualify for the lowest fire insurance rates possible for residents and business interests in and around Williamston, the department has constantly added to its equipment over the past more than 50 years, also effecting necessary changes in its plan of organization to conform to regulations issued by the North Carolina Inspection and Rating Bureau. Frequent educational and training schools are held, through cooperation of state fire marshal's office and the rating bureau, to enable the firemen to maintain a high degree of professional skill and efficiency, some of the schools being for all the county fire departments and others for district or regional organizations. Personnel of the local companies have also been enabled to attend fire colleges held by departments in some of the larger cities and towns of the state where superior facilities are available for such programs.

Strictly a volunteer organization in its earlier days, Marvin Coltrain became the first full-time paid fireman of the Williamston department on October 7, 1957, when he was employed by the board of commissioners. A little over two years later, December 7, 1959, F. Daryl

Taylor became the second paid fireman, and up to late 1974 three more had been added. At that time the department was composed of five full-time paid firemen, 28 volunteer members, and five junior firemen between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

Adjoining the fire department's headquarters in the municipal building is another volunteer organization which has become an adjunct of the town government in recent years. It is the Williamton Rescue Squad, which was organized and incorporated in the latter part of January, 1960. It has made its services indispensable to the community in the intervening years, providing first-aid treatment and ambulance service for victims of attacks of all kinds, accidents in general, and rescue work in emergencies of every nature. Its members have spent countless hours without remuneration not only while on duty but in training sessions and in preparing themselves to handle whatever emergency may develop with the next telephone call.

The Williamston Rescue Squad was organized January 29, 1960, as the second of its kind in the county, the one at Robersonville being first. There were 12 charter members of the unit, and its organization was completed by election of the following officers: Dr. G. G. Himmelwright, president; Charles H. Manning, vice president; and Jack Jernigan, secretary and treasurer. Other members were William Spruill, Warren Goff, Darrell Taylor, David Rogerson, James Speller, Preston Johnson, Daryl Clayton, Jr., Jack H. Edwards, and James E. Myers.

The first emergency vehicle was a 1954 Ford station wagon, contributed to the squad by Williamston Motor Company, and it was equipped by Biggs Funeral Home with stretchers, oxygen supplies, and a few other items for use in emergencies. In more recent years, the squad conducted successful campaigns to raise funds for modern and fully equipped rescue ambulances. By 1974 it was operating two such vehicles and also has a heavy duty truck, with power winch and similar equipment, which was contributed to it by the Virginia Electric & Power Company. In August, 1972, Murray Holloman was employed as a full-time member and later Terry Barber became the second paid member of the unit, with others added since.

Williamston's first bond issuance became necessary in 1908, after the board of commissioners authorized construction of the town's first Municipal Building or "Town Hall." The board voted to issue $10,000 in bonds to raise funds for constructing the building, the first floor being completed and occupied that same year. Then, on January 15, 1909, a mass meeting of townspeople was held, at which the commissioners explained they had already spent $10,900 and that additional funds would be needed to finish and furnish the second floor of the building for use as an assembly hall and "opera house" and to install a clock in the tower. It was explained that some additional revenue could be obtained if the second floor was made into a theatre. Those present at the meeting voted unanimously in favor of issuing the additional $3,000 in bonds—later increased to $3,500—and this was done.

The first floor of the completed building provided quarters for the fire equipment then owned by the town, an office for the mayor, police chief, tax collector, meeting place for the commissioners, and several booths or stalls for sanitary meat markets, and some storage space. The second floor for years was used principally as a theatre; for traveling stage and vaudeville shows at first, later for motion pictures and occasionally for home-talent productions. The clock was installed and, until the building's complete destruction by fire on December 1, 1958, was generally considered by residents to furnish the town's "official" time.

Until June, 1919, the $13,500 in bonds issued in 1908 and 1909 for the Municipal Building comprised Williamston's only long-term indebtedness. However, in the ensuing year and a half from June, 1919, through November, 1920, it became heavily involved in a program of needed major improvements—including installation of water and sewer lines and an electric plant—which required issuance of $310,000 in bonds. The result was nearly disastrous, as the debt became a serious threat to the town's continued existence during the lengthy readjustment period following World War I and the great depression a decade or so later in the early thirties. An added complication was the fact that Martin County also was going overboard in the issuance of bonds for roads and bridges, as well as the school consolidation program getting underway about that time. Considered very necessary to the town's well-being, all these expensive programs required relatively high tax rates on both the town and county levels. While some lost their homes and farms during those stringent times, it is a tribute to a great majority of the people that they managed not only to struggle through it all but to maintain their record of keeping pace with the progress of areas not so heavily encumbered.

Electricity was first provided in Williamston by private industry, a 20-year franchise having been issued by the board of commissioners to the Virginia-Carolina Peanut Company on October 3, 1910. Work was started immediately on construction of a distribution system and a building to house generating equipment, with plans to obtain the steam power needed from boilers then in use at the peanut plant. However, he peanut mill burned in March, 1911, before the equipment could be nstalled, although it had been received and was on the platform at the ailroad station when the fire occurred.

The plant was completed some time later and put into operation for lighting purposes, current being provided only at night, usually from a half hour before sunset until a half hour after sunrise the following morning. Terms of the franchise called for the town to pay $200 per month for 78 street lights; 14 of them to be of 250 watts, 14 of 100 watts and 50 of 60 watts. An interesting provision in the contract was that the firm was to "give all night service (except on moonlight nights, when the moon is furnishing sufficient light—this to be determined by what is known as Moonlight Schedule, such as used by other towns of like size in North Carolina)." A special act was passed by the General Assembly on February 17, 1911, authorizing Williamston to levy a special tax of up to 15 cents on each $100 property valuation, plus 45 cents poll, to pay for the cost of lighting the streets.

W. C. Manning organized the Williamston Electric Company and bought the plant and equipment in March, 1913. Despite numerous difficulties, including a shortage of coal that caused a complete shutdown for two weeks during World War I, he managed to continue in business until around 1920, when the town purchased the entire operation, which was still being used only for lighting purposes at night. The plant was then located at the Williamston Cooperage Company mill on the Roanoke River about where the fertilizer plant was built in later years. A portion of the town's $310,000 bond issues of 1919 and 1920 was authorized to be used for construction of a building and installation of new equipment on Sycamore Street south of the railroad crossing, the remainder being used for the installation of the water and sewer system. The new plant was completed and placed in operation in 1921, and it was somewhere around this time that electricty was made available on a 24-hour basis.

The town remained in the power and light business until Virginia Electric & Power Company made an offer for the entire system in 1927, just after a survey had indicated the equipment installed at such great expense in 1921 was becoming obsolete. A referendum was held December 20, 1927, citizens of the town voting 238 to 9 in favor of selling the equipment and distribution facilities to the power firm for $75,000 and granting it a 30-year franchise to serve the town and its people. After constructing transmission lines and the necessary substations, the company actually began operations in the town on December 19, 1928, and the franchise was renewed in 1958 for another 30-year period. However, many of the provisions in the original contract calling for free electricity for pumping water, street lights and other purposes no longer apply.

After subsidizing to some degree the private production of electricity by paying $200 per month for street lighting back in 1911, the town had a relatively quiet period, so far as municipal improvements were concerned, through World War I. With the population nearing 2,000, it began to have growing pains again in 1919, when the board of commissioners started issuing bonds for a number of major projects, including purchase of the electric system, erecting a new building, and putting in new generating equipment, as well as installing water and sewer systems and starting a program of grading and surfacing some of the main streets.

Starting in June, 1919, the commissioners authorized issuance of $150,000 in bonds, $25,000 being earmarked for street improvements, another $25,000 for a sewer system, and a whopping $100,000 for "water and lights." This was followed in May of the following year by $100,000 more in bonds for "water, light and power." The allocation for "light and power" was made to purchase the Williamston Electric Company's plant and equipment for $10,000, constructing a new building and installation of a completely new steam plant and generating equipment on Sycamore Street just south of the railroad crossing. This was followed in November, 1920, with two more issues to enable work to be finished on the contracts outstanding, one of $30,000 for "water and electric lights" and the other, also for $30,000, for the sewer system. All these issues added up to $310,000, which, with the $13,500 voted for the town hall back in 1908, brought the total bonded indebtedness up to $323,500, very effecitvely ending that method of financing municipal projects for the ensuing 15 years.

Work on all the projects, except for surfacing some of the main streets, was completed about 1921. However, it was late in the summer of 1923 before grading and paving of stretches of Main, Washington and Haughton Streets got underway and nearly the end of the year before the work was completed. Improvement of the streets made a tremendous difference in the appearance of the town, especially in the business section. The Williamston newspaper reported in one of its August, 1920, issues that police were called to remove a "big mammy sow," which had escaped from her pen, from a mudhole at the intersection of Main and Washington Streets in front of the Atlantic Hotel. "Life in a small town is just one funny thing after another," the article stated, "and while some 'get in the swim at the big mill,' others can only make it to a mud wallow in the middle of the street."

After the large bond issues of 1919 and 1920, the town struggled along for the remainder of that decade and the depression years of the early 1930's without any major new expenditures. However, in 1938, with the population inching toward the 4,000 mark, it again became necessary to consider long-term financing for urgently needed additions and expansion of facilities. Deciding to take advantage of some of the matching funds which had been made available through relief agencies created during the "New Deal" days, the town commissioners proposed issuing $72,000 in bonds, of which $34,000 were to be used for more street and sidewalk improvements, $15,000 for extension of water and sewer lines, another $15,000 for an additional deep well, and $8,000 to build a swimming pool.

After details of the program had been explained, a special election was held August 9, 1938, to let citizens of the town decide the matter for themselves. A special registration was ordered, with a majority of those registering required for approval of the bond issues, each of the four proposals being voted on separately. All four of the propositions were carried by majorities of more than four to one. Actually, less than a dozen opposition votes were cast, although all who registered and did not vote were counted as being opposed to the bond issuance. The entire program was successfully completed, with the swimming pool being finished and put into operation in the spring of 1939.

The pool proved to be one of the most popular projects the town had ever undertaken, although a financial liability in many respects. It was operated by the municipal government itself until 1951, when it was leased to individuals on a year-to-year basis for about a decade. It finally was closed in the 1960's, after the facilities and equipment had deteriorated to such an extent that officials said it would have required more than the entire plant was worth to have brought it into conformity with the increasingly complex health and sanitation regulations which had become effecitve by that time. After it had been closed for several years, the property was sold to the county. The pool was filled with dirt, covered with rock and gravel, and in 1973 the entire lot was surfaced for a parking area extending from the courthouse westward to an entrance on South Watts Street adjacent to the old American Legion Building. In later years, the town, as part of its overall recreational program, provided some financial aid for construction of the Martin Street swimming pool and continues to contribute to its operation, but has no part in its management and direction.

In succeeding years, it has been necessary for Williamston to issue bonds on a number of occasions to pay for permanent installations of various kinds. Several were for street improvements, including surfacing about 60 per cent of the cost of which is usually recoverable in the form of assessments. The standard formula for dividing the cost of street paving is for property owners on the two sides to pay 30 per cent each, leaving the remaining 40 per cent to be paid by the town. Payments of assessments by property owners, as a rule, are spread over 10 years at the rate of 10 per cent each year, plus interest. It is customary for owners of 50 per cent or more of the property on each block to petititon for the paving on these terms before the town commissioners give consideration to any requests for new surfacing projects.

Two of the larger bond issues in recent years were for construction of a new municipal building in 1960-61, following destruction by fire of the old one, and building and putting into operation in 1964 a complete treatment and disposal plant for sewage, as required by state and federal health regulations. Special elections were held before the bonds could be issued for the projects, and both were carried by one-sided margins, although only a small fraction of those qualified took part in the voting.

The old town hall was destroyed in a spectacular daylight fire on December 1, 1958. It had cost something more than $15,000 when constructed in 1908, and its value at the time it burned some 50 years later was estimated at $100,000, with $22,000 in insurance. Several plans for its replacement were considered by the board in the following seven or eight months before the commissioners, on August 4, 1959, ordered a special election to be held on issuing $165,000 in bonds to pay for the project. The election was held October 9, 1959, with only a small fraction of the more than 2,000 eligible voters participating, issuance of the bonds being favored by a vote of 196 to 49. Contracts for the new municipal building were let on February 10, 1960, but it was more than a year later, May 21, 1961, before it was completed and occupied. The new structure provided headquarters for the police and fire departments, including lockers and lounges for personnel, records vault, offices for the town administrator and staff, tax collector, chamber of commerce, recreation director, building inspector and codes enforcement officer, clerical personnel and secretaries, as well as an assembly hall where town meetings are held. An addition was built later for the rescue squad and much of its equipment and vehicles.

The sewage treatment and disposal system was a much longer time in development. The matter was first brought up in the latter 1950's, when regulations were issued by the state and federal governments barring the dumping of raw sewage into the Roanoke River, as the town had been doing ever since its first sewer system was installed in the early 1920's. The matter dragged along for several years until an ultimatum was issued by the North Carolina Stream Sanitation Commission requiring action to be taken prior to April 1, 1962. The commissioners, at a meeting in February of that year, ordered a special election for March 27, 1962, on issuance of $442,000 in bonds for the new system. An even smaller percentage of eligible voters turned out this time than before, the bond issue being approved by a vote of 102 to 49, and work was finally started in the spring of 1963. Also approved was a provision to double water rates to provide funds for paying off the bonds and interest, this provision becoming effective in March, 1963. The project was completed and put into use in June, 1964. Final cost was $626,495.03, or $44,246.25 more than the original estimate of $582,248.78, the $44,246.25 more than the original estimate being due to quicksand and other unforeseen obstacles encountered by the contractors. A federal grant of $174,674.63 and a private firm's contribution of $26,500 reduced the town's share of the actual cost to $425,310.40.

A major step was taken to alleviate what was fast developing into a serious problem for Williamston in October, 1953, when a contract was let enabling U. S. Highways 17 and 64—and later U. S. 13—to by-pass the main part of the town. Prior to that time, all through highway traffic was routed from one end of the municipality to the others by way of the principal business section, making right-angle turns at several street intersections in the process. It was planned to four-lane the by-pass route, sometimes called "The Boulevard," but some of the funds originally allocated were transferred to other projects and only two lanes were built and put into service at first. About 10 years later, in May, 1967, the first two lanes were resurfaced and the other two lanes added.

With the tremendous increase in automobile traffic following the end of World War II, parking became a major problem—as well as perennial headache—to local officials everywhere. Williamston authorities tried setting time limits and other methods, but enforcement proved ineffectual, and it was finally decided to install parking meters on the principal streets. Accordingly, the meters were installed and a special ordinance requiring their use became effective August 9, 1948. The meters provided some relief and, although not popular, they became the source of a sizable amount of revenue, increasing from an estimated $3,500 the first year of operation to a peak of $6,600 for fiscal 1967-68. Competition began to put pressure on development of free parking areas, both public and private; and, after nearly 25 years in use, the commissioners, in February, 1973, voted to discontinue the meters for a 90-day trial period. They were removed from the posts and never replaced. The posts have since been taken up from both the streets and parking lots.

Williamston has been a leader among eastern North Carolina towns in making arrangements for off-street parking, starting back in the late 1950's, and as time went on much of the vacant areas back of stores on both sides of Main Street were cleaned off, paved and eventually made available for that purpose. One of the first public parking lots was located adjacent to the Boy Scout Building on the west side of South Smithwick Street. It was surfaced and parking meters installed at first, but later made a free parking zone. Some years after that, all of the vacant property behind stores on the north side of Main Street between Smithwick and Haughton was cleared, surfaced and marked for free parking. Similar action followed early in 1974 for much of the area back of stores on the south side of Main Street. A count made shortly thereafter by the chamber of commerce showed the town had 2,284 free parking spaces, including those in the Belk-Tyler, Be-Lo and Grant City shopping centers. Since then, the Martin Plaza shopping center has been opened, bringing the total of hard-surfaced free parking spaces in the principal shopping areas to well over 2,500, including street, off-street, public and private parking lots.

Although not a project of the local government, the town made a contribution to the National Guard Armory by having about $500 worth of grading done at the site before construction was started in 1953. The building was completed and dedicated in late October, 1954, about the time work was finished on the by-pass. Built largely by federal funds, the armory was originally the home of Battery C, 150th AAA Batallion, North Carolina National Guard, but the unit designation has been changed, along with its equipment and armament, several times in the intervening years.

Within the past 20 years, the complexity of municipal government has been greatly expanded, not only in increasing the amount of services made necessary by continued growth and progress but also in enlarging its responsibilities for the maintenance, protection and improvement of the environment. These factors made mandatory the creation of regulatory and administrative agencies for the control of zoning, building, development of new housing facilities, location of industries and other facets of community life. All this has been further complicated by federal and state agencies providing matching-fund or revenue-sharing programs making it possible for some of the benefits to be obtained with a minimum of cost to the local government involved, provided it met the requirements.

Williamston's first zoning commission was established in August, 1953, and dealt almost entirely with setting aside certain areas for residential, commercial, and industrial development. It was composed of five members, as follows: Walter T. Martin, Mrs. Edna Bondurant, John H. Gurganus, G. P. Hall, and W. B. Gaylord, Jr. The commission elected its own officers, Martin being made chairman and Mrs. Bondurant secretary. It continued to function for several years, until supplanted in November, 1965, by the Williamston Area Planning and Zoning Commission.

Created by a special act of the 1965 General Assembly, the Williamston Area Planning and Zoning Commission is a semiautonomous group with broad powers for conducting studies and making recommendations as to zoning and major street, highway and public facilities planning. The commission members are appointed by the town board of commissioners, and their recommendations are subject to review and final approval by the board; but, in effect, the recommendations of the commission are usually final, as town officials are very reluctant to go against its recommendations.

The planning and zoning commission has jurisdiction not only over property inside the town limits but also for one mile in all directions around the town except that part which lies within Bertie County. There are five members of the commission, one of whom is from outside the city limits, and they serve staggered terms of three years each. The first members appointed in 1965, when the commission was established, were as follows: David C. Stables, chairman; James O. Perry, vice chairman; John Hatton Gurganus, secretary; James E. Griffin, and Clarence Griffin. There have been a number of changes in membership of the board since the first was established. Stables moved away and was succeeded by James E. Griffin, who was chairman in 1974.

The act of 1965 which provided for establishment of the Williamston Area Planning and Zoning Commission also contained a provision for appointment of a board of adjustment and codes enforcement officer. The board of adjustment is composed of 10 members, five who live inside the town limits and five who live outside but within the one-mile radius which comes under the jurisdiction of the area planning and zoning commission. This board recommends changes and adjustments to regulations which may be put ito effect by the commission. The five members of the first board from inside the town limits appointed by the town commissioners were Nelson Prince, John

Slade, Thomas W. Crockett, Sam Mabry, and Mrs. Bettie Griffin. Edward Beach and Garland Wynne were appointed alternate members.

The town government first became involved in the recreational program for young people back in the 1930's, when it constructed the swimming pool. It assumed heavier responsibilities in the 1950's by making appropriations for the summer recreational activities sponsored by locally organized independent groups. This included little league type baseball, for which lighted fields were provided, operation of several playgrounds in different parts of the town, lighted tennis courts at the school playgrounds, as well as supervision for organized games and athletic contests.

Then, in 1965, the town board was prevailed upon to make an appropriation, which, with available outside funds, made it possible to employ a full-time recreational director and develop a year-around program. This was done, and John Thompson, the first full-time director, entered upon his duties in Williamston on May 3, 1965. He remained for a little more than a year and a half, resigning, effective January 1, 1967, to accept a position in another town. Since that time, Mrs. Mary Jackson has supervised the town's recreation program from the office of the recreation commission in the Municipal Building. These activities are entirely separate and apart from the program sponsored and developed by the Williamston Police Club, which receives most of its financing through federal and state grants. Members of the recreation commission are appointed by the town commissioners, and there has been quite a turnover in its personnel in recent years. Herbert L. Gay was chairman of the commission in 1974.

Housing for low-income family groups became a concern of the municipal government in November, 1964, after specifics of a program for financing such an undertaking were explained in detail at a meeting of the board of commissioners by an Atlanta, Ga., architect who had been associated with several such developments. However, it was almost three years later, in July, 1967, before tentative approval was voted by the commissioners, and members of the Williamston Housing Authority were appointed by them to proceed with such a project. In January, 1968, town officials authorized the commission to proceed with applications for up to 200 units of low-cost housing, and this was increased in October, 1970, to authorization for up to 450 units over a 10-year period if necessary.

Terms of members of the original housing authority were staggered so that it would be necessary to appoint or reappoint no more than one member in each succeeding year. Those named to that first board, and the periods they were designted to serve, were as follows: Bruce E. Roebuck, chairman, five years; C. U. Rogers, four years; Williard C. Moses, three years; David R. Davis, Jr.; two years; and Clay M. Kirkman, Jr., one year. All appointments made after the first year were for five-year terms. Several changes have been made in personnel of the authority in recent years. Henry M. Leggett, Jr., was named to the full-time position of executive director of the authority and put in active charge of administering the entire program several years afterwards.

During the early part of 1970, approval was granted by federal officials for 100 units to be constructed in Williamston, about 20 of which were to be reserved for the elderly. They were located at two sites, 61 units at "Riverdale" on East Main Street and the remaining 39 at "Warren Court," just off Warren Street in the southeast section. Units range in size from one to five bedrooms, and each unit has some major appliances, such as water heaters, refrigerators and ranges, but no washers or driers. Rent for each of the units, usually around 20 per cent of the income of the family group, includes cost of utilities, such as water, electricity, fuel and gas. Bids for the first 100 units in Williamston were received in January, 1971, and the work was completed and all units occupied by June 30, 1972. Applications for the first units totaled almost 300; and since then approval has been secured from federal officials for an additional 40 units, which the local director hopes may be completed and ready for occupancy by December, 1975.

The town became involved in another phase of public housing in May, 1969, following a study made by a special committee appointed a month earlier, composed of Mrs. W. H. Farrior, Mrs. John T. Boykin, Jr., and Dr. David Marshburn. They reported Williamston had a substantial amount of sub-standard housing in unsightly, unsafe, insanitary "blighted areas," and recommended appointment of an urban renewal organization to remedy the situation. The town board approved the recommendation and appointed the following to the original Williamston Urban Redevelopment Commission: Mrs. John T. Boykin, Jr., Dr. David Marshburn, W. I. Skinner, Jr., William J. Morris, and Dr. L. H. Wynn.

This commission completed its organization immediately and took steps to put the program into effect. In January, 1970, application was made to the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency for a survey and planning grant of $128,383. This survey was to be made of the so-called "blighted area," including about 73 acres on the west side of Washington Street Extension from the railroad crossing south almost to Carolina Avenue and extending several blocks in depth. Most of the housing in the area was reported to be sub-standard, and it was proposed to clear about 40 acres and offer it for resale for privately built housing, with some 20 acres to be cleared for eventual construction of 100 to 150 additional units of low-rent housing by the housing authority.

Due to overlapping functions of the redevelopment commission and the housing authority, the town board of commissioners voted in April, 1972 to abolish the commission and combine its work with that of the housing authority. While the plan of the redevelopment commission had been approved, it was not until after the consolidation that clearing in the vicinity of Hayes School was begun in the late summer of 1974. Members of the Williamston Housing Authority at that time were Bruce E. Roebuck, chairman; Mrs. Joan Shaw, C. Urbin Rogers, W. C. Moses, and D. R. Davis, Jr. M. Henry Leggett was executive director, and it was under his supervision that work was carried out on the clearing contract. He said approval had been secured for construction of 40 low-rent units, and that he hoped they could be completed and made ready for occupancy by the latter part of 1975 or early 1976.

Still another service was added to that afforded by the municipality of Williamston on July 1, 1969, when it assumed responsibility for operating the Martin Memorial Library. The library had been established as a public service by a private organization on April 11, 1938, with representatives of the Woman's Club taking a leading part in its development and operations over the years since that time. The library was first located in the American Legion Building on South Watts Street, then moved a few years later to the town hall and later to the second floor of the old George Reynolds Hotel Buliding after the town building burned in December, 1958. Friends of the library came to its rescue again and raised about $40,000 for construction of the library's own building on East Grace Street, across from the junior high school building, where it is now located.

Operated strictly as a private organization up to the middle of 1969, it appeared for a time that the library would be forced to close down until the town was persuaded to step in and assume responsibility for its continuance. Actual control of the library's operation is under the supervision of a library directorate composed of nine members appointed by the town commissioners. Members of the first board of directors appointed by the commissioners, and the length of their terms, were as follows: A. J. Manning, George W. Corey and Mrs. T.

B. Brandon, Jr., two years each; Mrs. W. O. Abbitt, Mrs. Irving Margolis, Joseph W. Griffin, four years each; John H. Gurganus, Mrs. J. C. Cooke, Miss Marjorie Lindsley, six years each. The town contributed $9,000 to the operating budget of the library for the fiscal year 1969-70.

JAMESVILLE

Names of the oldest settlers of the Jamesville section are difficult to come by today, although it is known there was a shipping point and trading post there for some time before the town was established. One of the three original "river towns" and the second to be incorporated in Martin County after North Carolina became a state, the municipality's charter was issued December 29, 1785, final day of the session of the North Carolina General Assembly which began in New Bern on November 19, that year. Blountville, in the upper part of the county, was incorporated the same day as Jamesville, but it has since completely disappeared, and there are no signs or records that it ever existed, except for the act of incorporation.

Richard Caswell was again governor of the state at that time, Alexander Martin was speaker of the state senate and Richard Dobbs Spaight was speaker of the house of commons. Martin County's senator then was Whitmel Hill, and its two members of the house of commons were Edmund Smithwick and Samuel Williams. This was only eleven years after Martin County had been established in 1774 and about six years after Williamston had been incorporated in November, 1779. Despite being smaller, Jamesville was incorporated some 19 years ahead of Hamilton, which did not receive its charter until 1804.

Each of the first three county towns which are still in existence today was recognized for some particular contribution to the agricultural, commercial or industrial life of the county and section. Jamesville, the second oldest, was noted primarily for its forest products industry—or "swamping", as it was then sometimes called—including manufacture of shingles and lumber, which were exported to other places throughout the nation and some foreign countries. The town also was widely known for its fishing, several commercial fisheries being located on the Roanoke River in the immediate vicinity of the town. Williamston, oldest and largest of the three existing towns, was primarily a shipping and trading point for a wide area, as well as the seat of the county government after Martin was chartered in 1774. Hamilton became rich in agricultural tradition, being surrounded on three sides by the large Roanoke River plantations, owners of which were prominent in politics and provided much of the leadership for government of the burgeoning state and nation.

Many of the names associated with the early history of Jamesville have been found in laws related to its incorporation or in revising or amending such acts. While the town may be short on its commercial and industrial records, it has an extensive legislative history, no less than 18 private bills dealing with municipal affairs having been passed by the North Carolina General Assembly between the years 1785 and 1940, plus quite a number since that time, mostly related to changing the town limits or dealing with action or lack of action by its commissioners. The name of the town itself appears in four different ways in the 18 various acts. It was first incorporated in 1785 as "James Town." Twelve years later, in 1797, a special act refers to it as "Jamestown." Then, in 1803, another special act drops the "w" and calls it "Jameston." Continuing the confusion, it was referred to alternately as "Jamestown" and "Jameston" in acts of 1808, 1832-33 and 1851. Finally, on February 10, 1855, the General Assembly adopted a special act officially changing the name to "Jamesville," by which designation it has since been known. There is no record or reference to anyone named "James," for whom the town could have been named.

Complete text of the original act providing for the incorporation of Jamesville, as it appears in Volume 24, "State Records of North Carolina," compiled and edited by former Chief Justice Walter Clark of the State Supreme Court, is as follows (spelling and punctuation as in the act):

"Chapter LXII. An Act for Erecting a Town on the Lands of Luke Mizell and William Mackay, on the South Side of Roanoke River, in Martin County.

"Whereas, it hath been represented to this General Assembly that the lands of Luke Mizell and William Mackay, on the south side of Roanok River, is a healthy, pleasant situation, and very conveniently situated for trade, and the said Luke Mizell and William Mackay, having signified their consent to have fifty acres of said land laid off for a town, which will greatly promote the trade and navigaton of said river:

"I. Be it Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby Enacted by the authority of the same, That the said fifty acres of land be and is hereby constituted and established a town, and shall be called by the name of James Town.

"II. And be it further Enacted by the authority aforsaid, That from and after the passing of this Act, that Benjamin Harrison, Esq., John

Stewart, Samuel Smithwick, Luke Mizell and James Mackay, be and every of them are hereby constituted commissioners and trustees for designing, building, and carrying on the said town, and they shall stand seized in an indefeasible estate in fee simple in the said fifty acres of land aforesaid, to and for the uses, intents, and purposes hereby declared; and the said commissioners, or any three of them, shall have full power and authority to meet as often as they shall think necessary, to appoint a public quay on the said river adjoining the said town for a public landing as they shall think convenient and necessary.

"III. Be it Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said commissioners or a majority of them, shall appoint a time and give public notice thereof for meeting the subscribers on said land, for determining the property of each particular lot which shall be drawn by ballot in a fair manner, by direction and in the presence of a majority of the commissioners at least, and each subscriber shall be entitled to the lot or lots which shall happen to be drawn for him, and correspond with the number in the plan for the said town; and the said commissioners or a majority of them, shall make and execute deeds for the granting and conveying the said lots to the persons entitled to the same, their heirs and assigns forever; and also, to all and every other person or persons who shall purchase any lot or lots in said town, at the proper costs and charges of the grantee or grantees to whom the same may be conveyed.

"IV. And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the respective subscribers of the said lot shall within three months after it shall be ascertained to whom each of the said lots doth belong in manner herein before mentioned, pay and satisfy to said commissioners the sum of five pounds for each lot by them subscribed for, and in case of the refusal or neglect of any subscriber to pay said sum, the said commissioners shall and may commence a suit for the same in their own names, and therein shall recover judgment with costs. And for continuing the succession of the said commissioners, Be it Enacted, that in case of death, refusal to act, or removal out of the State of any of the said commissioners, the surviving or other commissioners or the majority of them shall assemble, and shall from time to time by an instrument in writing, under the respective hands and seals nominate some other person, being an inhabitant or freeholder of the said town, in the place of him so dying, refusing to act or removing out of the State; which new commissioner so nominated and appointed, shall from thenceforth have the same power and authority in all things concerning the matters herein contained as if he had been expressly nominated and appointed by this Act.

"V. And be it further Enacted, That Luke Mizell and William Mackay may retain three lots each, whereon they have a storehouse and other bulidings already erected, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. (Passed December 29, 1785.)"

Due to the difficulty of travel, a special act was adopted by the General Assembly in 1797, providing that a separate election for members of the general assembly and representative in Congress be held in "Jamestown" for the convenience of inhabitants of the lower end of the county. The second Thursday in August of each year was set for such elections, which were to be held under the direction of the sheriff or any of his deputies. The act provided that such elections should be held "under the same rules, regulations and restrictions as are provided for other elections in this state; and the votes so taken shall be sealed up by the inspectors of the polls, and transmitted under the care of the sheriff, or other returning officer, to the courthouse of the county; where, after the election is closed, the seals shall be broke, and the votes counted with those taken at the courthouse; which votes taken at Jamestown aforesaid, shall, and they are hereby declared to be a part of the suffrages of the county of Martin; anything to the contrary notwithstanding."

Judging by some of the special acts of the assembly affecting the early Jamesville municipal government, the number of commissioners was sometimes three and sometimes five or even more. In 1803, a special act provided for addition of four men to the board of commissioners, specifying that they, "jointly with those already appointed, shall have and exercise all the powers and authorities which have been possessed and exercised by the commissioners heretofore appointed for the said town, anything to the contrary notwithstanding." New appointees were as follows: James Carmer, Benjamin Asbery, Jecabud Willis and Thomas Swinson. This could have meant an increase to nine members, since the first charter provided for five commissioners, or it might possibly have meant some were named to fill vacancies.

Some years later, there was a decline in number on the board, evidently due to deaths or some of the members moving away, as a special act of 1808 authorized freeholders to "meet at some convenient place in the town aforesaid, and there, under the inspection of one justice of the peace and two freeholders, shall elect, by ballot, three freeholders, residents of the town, commissioners thereof." The same act also provided that in future cases of death, removal or refusal to act by commissioners, such vacancies should be filled in the same manner.

Municipal elections were supposed to be held every year, but evidently there were periods when things were permitted to drift without any meetings being held until no one really knew what was to be done or who was supposed to do it. Several times it was necessary to have special bills enacted by the general assembly to appoint new officials and get the local government moving again. This was undoubtedly the case in the early 1830's, when "An Act for the Better Regulation of Jameston, in Martin County," was one of the laws enacted at the 1832-33 state legislature.

This act appointed five new commissioners: Phillip D. Seymour, Crossby S. Gardner, Starkey Gardner, Edmond S. Moore and S. W. Smithwick. They were to assume office in May, 1833, and were directed to hold at least one meeting every three months thereafter. They were directed and empowered to "levy and collect taxes on the lots and improvements and taxable polls in said town, for defraying the expenses incident to the police thereof; and may make and enforce, by warrant before any justice of the peace of said county, such ordinances as they may deem proper for the preservation of the health, and for the general welfare of said town, not inconsistent with the constitution and general laws of the state." Any three of the commissioners were to constitute a quorum, and they were empowered to fill any vacancies on the board caused by death, removal or refusal to act of any of the other commissioners.

The same situation must have developed again some 18 yeras later, for on January 27, 1851, the state assembly appointed five more commissioners for the town, Starkey W. Gardner being the only one of the five named in the 1832-33 act to be reappointed. The other four appointed in the new law were Clayton Moore, Mason Jones, Jesse J. Smith, and Joseph J. Williams. The next special act affecting the town was adopted February 10, 1855, providing "That the town in the county of Martin, heretofore incorporated, called and known by the name of Jamestown, be hereafter called and known by the name of Jamesville." This, at least, halted the switching back and forth between "Jamestown" and Jameston" in the half dozen or so acts following the town's incorporation.

In February, 1861, Mason Jones and H. W. Mizell were appointed by the legislature to hold an election for five commissioners of the town of Jamesville on the first Monday in April of that year.

Following the Civil War, on March 10, 1869, the state assembly passed an act amending the original charter of the town of Jamesville by setting new boundaries and providing for election of new commissioners that year. It also empowered the town board to lay out and extend streets, make grade regulations for drainage purposes and to define the width of footways on all of the streets. One of the boundaries mentioned in this act was along a railroad on the south side of the Plymouth road. This was evidently the Jamesville & Washington Railroad, first one in the county, work on which had been started the same year. It originally ran from the Roanoke River at Jamesville to the firm's sawmill at what was to become Dymond City; and some years later the rail line was extended to Washington.

The Tarboro Southerner ran an article in its issue of March 17, 1870, stating that Jamesville had the potential of becoming an important commercial center at that time. It quoted an excerpt from a letter written by a Jamesville correspondent to the Boston (Mass.) Advertiser about the progress being made by the Jamesville & Washington Lumber & Railroad Company. Under the heading, "A Rising Town," the Tarboro newspaper's complete article follows:

"We have several times already noticed the growing importance of the town of Jamesville, Martin County. In regard to this place, a letter to the Boston Advertiser says:

" 'Francis Lightfoot, of Philadelphia, immediately after the war, bought a large tract of land between the Roanoke and Tar Rivers. He and others organized and secured a charter for a company called the Jamesville & Washington Lumber & Railroad Company. Mr. Lightfoot was elected president, and for the past two years has been at work preparing for the settlement of a first-class town. The gentlemen associated with him are well known in Philadelphia as among the most reliable business men. A railroad has been built for several miles and the engine is running over it. The road will be further extended and open up a valuable tract of land suitable for farms. Already a few Pennsylvania farmers from Chester County have broken ground and their deep ploughing makes the natives stare. A flourishing town such as it is proposed to build up here will be a blessing to North Carolina. One such in each of the Southern States would do more for practical reconstruction that any amount of legislation.' "

A completely new act of incorporation for the town was approved by the state legislature on March 3, 1891, the boundaries being given by streets for the first time, and the office of mayor also being mentioned for the first time in the act. Beginning point of the boundary was "at the wharf of the Jamesville & Washington Railroad Company and opposite the government milepost; thence a southerly direction to the Jamesville and Washington Railroad; Thence along said Railroad to Washington Street; thence west along Washington Street to Stewart

Street, thence south along Stewart Street to Hardison Street; thence west along Hardison Street to the center of Maple Branch; thence south along the various courses of said branch to the corner in said branch; thence westwardly to opposite the head of Smithwick Street, thence northerly along said Smithwick Street to Roanoke River; thence along said river to the beginning."

The act specified that officers of the town should in the future consist of a mayor, five commissioners and a constable. It designated the first Monday in May of each year to be election day for the municipal officers "under the same rules and regulations that the state and county elections are held." Named to serve until the election that year were the following: N. S. Stallings, mayor; W. C. Hassell, U. S. Hassell, S. L. Ward, J. C. Lawrence, and Joseph Rhea, commissioners; and Sylvester Godard, constable. Thus it was that N. S. Stallings became the first mayor of Jamesville.

During the next 36 years, four bills were enacted by the General Assembly changing and extending the town boundaries, during which period the population of the town fluctuated from a low of 235 in 1900 to a high of 398 in 1910. An act approved on February 21, 1927, reduced the number of town commissioners from five to three, other provisions in the charter remaining substantially the same. Two new laws affecting the town were enacted in 1935. One provided for town elections to be held every two years instead of annually, ordered old registration books destroyed and a new registration to be required before the next election and appointed a new town election board as follows: C. B. Martin, registrar; L. W. Mizelle and Charlie Davenport, judges of election. The second act, approved in May, validated the property listing conducted prior to that time. In the intervening years, a number of special laws have been enacted, extending the corporate limits, increasing the number of commissioners to five again, and validating certain other proceedings related to town affairs.

No early records of the municipal government can be found, although there are some scattered minutes of town board meetings starting about 1911 and jumping about from then until fairly recent years. There is a report following the town election of May 2, 1911, about a meeting being held May 9, at which Justice of the Peace A. Corey administered the oath of office to the following recently elected officials: J. L. Davenport, mayor; J. E. Evans, J. J. McClees, G. S. Williams, C. A. Askew, and Robert O. Mobley, commissioners; W. H. Martin, treasurer; and R. W. Peacock, constable. At that meeting the board rented a room above the post office for a meeting place at $2 per month and ordered the purchase of six chairs at 60 cents each for use of those attending the meetings.

The board had trouble keeping a constable, as R. W. Peacock, who had been elected May 2, 1911, resigned on May 12, and Gold Mozingo was appointed to succeed him. Mozingo held the office for only about a month, resigning June 14 and being succeeded by J. B. Allen, effective June 15. Allen held the office for less than a year, resigning March 25, 1912, and it was nearly a month later, April 22, before E. E. Roberson was appointed his successor, salary for the office being fixed at $30 per month. Roberson's bond was arranged, and he was sworn in May 13, 1912.

A stringent ordinance concerning operation of motor vehicles on Jamesville Streets was adopted in July, 1912. It provided that all automobiles, motorcycles, or other motor vehicles should keep to the right and leave two-thirds of the streets clear, with a maximum speed limit of 10 miles per hour or 5 miles per hour at "all curves and crooks." Motor vehicles were also required to "stop on signal (holding up hand) from a person riding, leading or driving a horse until passed if going in the same direction," and if the "horses or other animals appear frightened to cut off motor to prevent accidents." Such violation was a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of $10 for the first offense.

At the election in 1913, the following officers were elected: C. A. Askew, mayor; W. H. Martin, L. W. Mizell, Luther Hardison, E. H. Ange, and John D. Lilley, commissioners. Lilley was elected clerk by the board and held that office for a good many years. Askew was mayor for only a little over a month, resigning July 31st, with A. Corey being named to succeed him. Steps were taken the following year to provide some lighting for the streets, the board voting April 4, 1914, to order one dozen (kerosene) lamps for the streets.

The commissioners continued to have their problems in keeping a constable on the job. E. E. Roberson, who had accepted the position in May, 1912, resigned in June, 1913; and J. B. Allen, who had previously held the office, was reappointed; but he remained only until March, 1914, when he again resigned. J. D. Coltrain was the next man to hold the job, taking over in April, 1914, when the pay was raised to $50 per month, but he lasted only a few months, F. W. Holliday being appointed in August of that year, his pay being fixed at $35 per month, plus fees. It is not recorded how long he held the position, but J. B. Allen was back as constable at a meeting in May, 1915, his pay being fixed at $10 per month, plus fees and $1 per day "for supervising street work, etc." At that meeting the duties of constable were set out as follows: "(1) Light all town lamps when needed at night and keep lamps filled and cleaned; (2) Collect all taxes, rents, and perform street duties; (3) Execute ordinances of the town, receive fees for taking up stock and make arrests." Then, on December 30, 1915, it was recorded that E. E. Roberson was again constable at a salary of $1.25 per day for time actually worked. Six months later, on June 15, 1916, Z. Z. Price was constable, and in November that year it was reported that Joseph H. Holliday had been appointed constable at $30 per month.

Minutes of a meeting on May 17, 1915, show the following recently elected officials were sworn in: J. L. Davenport, mayor; W. W. Walters, W. J. Warrington, Eli H. Ange, Clair Fleming, John D. Lilley. The meeting was then suddenly adjourned "because of an approaching thunderstorm," a continued session being held the following day. To insure operation of a movie theatre there a meeting was held shortly afterwards and it was recorded that Mr. Sandler, "the moving picture man," was released from payment "of any and all town licenses."

Another slate of town officers was installed on June 25, 1917, shortly after the start of World War I, as follows: E. H. Ange, mayor; W. W. Walters, R. O. Martin, J. G. Long, J. W. Jones, and Ransom Roberson. Martin was named clerk. About a month later, the mayor, who had been authorized to employ a policeman at no more than $50 per month, reported he had been unable to secure anyone to fill the position. Four days later, July 27, at a called meeting, the commissioners employed Charles M. Parrisher of Roper as "chief of police" at $65 per month. This was unfortunate for both him and the town, as he was shot and killed by an alleged bootlegger on September 8, 1917, and there is no record of anyone else being named to the position until 1922.

Town officials chosen at the election in 1919 were installed on May 12 as follows: Luther Hardison, mayor; S. W. Manning, E. H. Ange, John D. Lilley, and Dr. J. E. Smithwick, commissioners. H. G. Griffin had also been elected, but declined to serve, and R. O. Martin was appointed in his stead. Mayor Hardison resigned in February, 1920, and A. Corey was appointed to serve out the unexpired term. Mayor Corey was reelected in May, 1921, along with the following commissioners: L. G. Carson, S. T. Jackson, W. B. Gaylord, Dr. U. S. Hassell, and J. R. Manning. Manning was elected clerk, for which he was to be paid $25 per year. There had been no mention of a constable or policeman being employed since Chief Parrisher was killed in 1917 until August, 1922, when Sam Godard was named constable at $15 per week, or $2.50 per day. It was noted at the same meeting that all male citizens were subject to road or street work for four days each year, or to pay $4 in lieu thereof, the year being from August to August.

There is confusion about town board meetings in 1923, two sessions held during May being marked "cancelled" in the minutes book. At one of them it had been recorded that C. A. Askew was sworn in as mayor, along with the following commissioners: A. Corey, R. O. Martin, W. J. Holliday, E. H. Ange, and J. R. Manning. At the other "cancelled" meeting, it was stated C. A. Askew asked to be relieved as mayor, since he was a member of the board of county commissioners; and E. H. Ange and R. O. Martin declined to serve as town commissioners, as they were members of the board of school trustees.

A few months later, on September 24, 1923, three members of the town board which had been elected in 1921—W. B. Gaylord, J. R. Manning, and O. G. Carson—met to elect successors for two members of that board who had passed away since. Chosen were W. R. Roberson and J. M. Jones, who were sworn in to succeed the deceased Dr. U. S. Hassell and S. T. Jackson. W. W. Walters was also elected mayor pro tempore to serve until the next election. At a later meeting L. M. Brown was installed as policeman or town constable at a salary of $15 per week. The speed limits ordinance was amended to allow motor vehicles to travel 18 miles per hour in the residential area and 12 miles per hour in the main business section. It was about this time that there was discussion at two sessions about building a power line to Williamston to obtain current for electric lights, and the constable was directed to circulate a petition calling for a special election on the matter.

The year 1925 saw a number of changes in the municipal government. The following officers were elected in May: A. Corey, mayor; W. J. Holliday, O. G. Carson, W. B. Gaylord, J. R. Manning, and C. A. Askew, commissioners. L. M. Brown resigned as police chief in July and in August J. B. Allen was appointed. Then in November, J. R. Manning, who had resigned as a commissioner some time before, was appointed police chief and tax collector, a position he was to hold for a number of years. His compensation was fixed at 15 per cent commission for collection of all town taxes amounting to $10 or less, and 10 per cent on amounts over $10, plus $3 per day for work on streets or other town business.

There are numerous gaps in the minutes from this point forward to relatively recent years. The next entry in the old book is dated July 10, 1939, after the number of commissioners had been reduced from five to three. This was the organization meeting following the election in May of that year. Three commissioners were sworn in—J. H. Holliday, O. W. Hamilton, and C. C. Fleming. Hamilton was elected chairman of the board, but there is no mention of a mayor until September, when A. Corey was appointed to that position. One of the main topics at a commissioners' meeting in March of the following year was making arrangements for having the newly installed electric street lights turned on as soon as possible by the Virginia Electric & Power Company, which had started serving the community a few years before.

Officers elected in May, 1943, and installed at a meeting in late June were J. H. Holliday, mayor; W. B. Gaylord, J. G. Long, and O. G. Carson, commissioners. Carson was appointed accountant and clerk to the board. At a session held the following year, the governing board voted not to allow the sale of beer in Jamesville. This was nullified in later years by a state-wide law permitting such sales unless specifically voted down by the people. The following officers were elected in 1945: Garland M. Anderson, mayor; John Long, Clyde Brown, and U. S. Hassell, commissioners. Long was the only man to be reelected, all the others being new to their positions.

Leslie W. Hardison was elected mayor in 1947, starting on the first of many terms, and the three commissioners were C. T. Gaines, J. W. Long, and H. A. Sexton. During this administration arrangements were made for a garbage pick-up every two weeks for residents of the town. In 1948, a notation in the minutes reports "Paul Hardison was appointed 'cop' of Jamesville at $140 per month." An ordinance was adopted in February, 1948, limiting the speed of all trains inside the town limits to 15 miles per hour, but it evidently created an adverse reaction, because the ordinance was amended at an August meeting to allow a speed of 25 miles per hour.

Leslie W. Hardison was reelected mayor in 1949; and new members of the board of commissioners were J. S. Godard and L. H. Hardison, J. W. Long finally agreeing to serve again as the third commissioner after several others had declined the office. In March, 1950, the town worked out a co-operative arrangement with the Ruritan Club there for development of a public cemetery for Jamesville. Much of the work on this project was contributed by members of the club, while the town advanced $294.59 for needed materials and equipment, the money to be refunded to the town as lots in the cemetery were sold.

There is no mention of an election at the usual time in May, 1951; but Leslie W. Hardison, L. H. Hardison, and J. W. Long met November 21, that year, in what was recorded as "the last meeting prior to submitting their resignations" and voted themselves compensation for "services rendered during their terms of office." The next report of a meeting was on May 5 1952, when the minutes show there were five commissioners again, meeting in a reorganization session, although it was an off-year and there is no explanation as to how they were elected or appointed. Present were Leslie W. Hardison, again mayor; James E. Smithwick, J. W. Long, R. C. Sexton, E. L. Martin, and L. H. Hardison, commissioners. Long was elected clerk, Miss Esta Martin was appointed tax collector, and Harry Jones was employed as policeman.

Leslie W. Hardison, mayor of Jamesville in 1974, held that office more times and for probably a longer period than any other person in the history of the town, although the records are not complete and he is not certain himself about how long he had served. From the records available, it is known that he was elected mayor as far back as 1947, and he thinks he held the office before then. At any rate, he has been in and out as mayor numerous times since, and he is also known to have been a member of the board of town commissioners on several occasions, including some before he was elected mayor.

Alexander Corey, an outstanding figure of the Jamesville section for many years, was also mayor and member of the board of town commissioners on numerous occasions during the early half of the present century. His talents were versatile to the point of being almost limitless, and he served not only his community but the county in numerous and varied capacities, although he was not a town official quite as long or as often as Leslie Hardison. Corey was pastor of county churches at different times, held evangelistic meetings throughout the entire region for many years, taught in several schools, was county surveyor for a time, did some farming, engaged in several business enterprises in his home area, and, in addition to all these, was appointed engrossing clerk of the North Carolina State Senate and served with distinction during several sessions of the legislature.

Along with other towns in the county, Jamesville adopted a new method for election of its municipal officials in 1973 by taking advantage of an option provided by the legislature that year. Called the non-partisan plurality plan, it eliminated the necessity for partisan primaries, which had been held prior to that time preceding the biennial elections, and it also changed the time for holding elections from May to Tuesday after the first Monday in November in odd-numbered years. Those elected now take office at the regular meeting in January following the election.

Officers chosen at the election in November, 1973, were as follows: Leslie W. Hardison, mayor; Jennis Price, William Earl Beacham, Robert P. Davis, Raymond Jack Modlin, and G. E. Martin, commissioners. Martin resigned some time afterwards, and up to the fall of 1974 no action had been taken to fill the vacancy. Mrs. Joyce Kay was the town clerk at that time, and the town had no police or law-enforcement personnel.

The Jamesville Volunteer Fire Department was first incorporated in 1953, although it had been organized a few yers previously. Tilmon Coltrain and P. C. Blount were leaders in organizing the department and each served as chief during its early days. The first piece of apparatus was converted by Coltrain and others from an old oil truck, donated by N. C. Green of Williamston. However, after their first fire, members of the department held a meeting and decided to obtain better equipment or "go out of business." Asked to help circulate a petition to raise money for some equipment, J. Carl Griffin, one of the members, handed in $50 in cash with the remark, "Here's my signature." The volunteers secured sufficient funds to purchase a new truck chassis and, again working with Coltrain, installed a pump and tank. That truck is still in operation, a state representative complimenting the firemen on its condition at a recent inspection. The department also has a new modern pumper and equipment, purchased in 1973, after the town had installed a water system and hydrants. Robert P. Davis was 1974 chief of the volunteer company, which had between 25 and 30 members.

As near as can be ascertained from decennial census reports, the population of Jamesville has ranged from something over a hundred in 1860 to a high of 538 in 1960. Population of the towns was not given prior to 1860, and the report for that year is rather sketchy in that only the heads of families and free blacks were counted, no figures being given for the number of other members of the free families or slaves. The 1860 report includes 43 white and 3 free Negro heads of families, which, it is believed, would make the total over 100 if other members of the families and slaves had been counted. The census of 1870, when there were no slaves, gives the Jamesville population as 150—probably an estimate—and in 1880 there were 299, including 127 white and 172 colored.

By 1890 the total population had risen to 346, but it dropped back to 235 in 1900. The town had its greatest percentage of growth in the next 10 years, reaching 398 in 1910, an increase of 163, or nearly 70 per cent. Following this, there was a loss of 9 in the next decade, the 1920 count being 389; and there was a loss of 45 between 1920 and 1930, the report showing 344 lived there in the latter year. The coming to the lower part of the county in 1937 of the North Carolina Pulp Company plant (later acquired and greatly expanded by the Weyerhaeuser corporation) brought about a reversal of the declining trend immediately preceding the start of World War II, the official report showing 499 people living there in 1940, up by 155 from 1930. The population has remained fairly constant around the 500-mark since that time. The 1950 census gave the town 529 persons; there were 538 in 1960 and 533 in 1970.

There has been a substantial increase in the population of both Jamesville and surrounding areas during the past several years. This was largely brought about by continued expansion of the Weyerhaeuser complex and location of the Coasts & Clark zipper plant just east of the city limits. Coats & Clark completed their plant and began operations in 1973, providing the spark for a number of major improvements and additons to all phases of life in the section. A new elementary school plant, costing nearly $1,000,000, has been completed and opened, the town again has a bank for the first time in more than half a century, a municipal water system has been installed, a low-rent housing project was nearing completion in the fall of 1974, and a number of privately owned dwellings were completed or under construction at the same time. Jamesville and its environs undoubtedly comprised the fastest-growing section of the county during the early 1970's.

While there is an appreciable amount of farming in the area around Jamesville and there have been a few sizable farm supply store operations in the town in past years, its economy probably has been less dependent on agriculture and more closely tied to industry and commercial fishing than any other place in the county. It never developed into an agricultural marketing and trading center as did most of the other county towns, especially Williamston, Hamilton, Robersonville, Hassell, and Everetts. Several commercial fisheries were established along the banks of the Roanoke in the vicinity of Jamesville in the early and middle 1800's and some of them continued their operations on past the middle of the current century. Another major industry developed around the manufacture of lumber and shingles in the swamps of the section, those engaged in it being referred to as "swampers" in some of the early accounts of such enterprises. There was also an extensive trade in naval stores, including the production of "tar, pitch and turpentine," products for which the entire southeastern part of the United States was once noted.

Operations of the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company, including manufacture of shingles and lumber, were centered at Astoria, about a mile up the Roanoke River from Jamesville, and it was the largest and most important single industry in the county in the middle and late

1800's. It was started before the Civil War and continued well up into the present century. Shortly after that war the Jamesville & Washington Railroad & Lumber Company launched into extensive lumber operations not very far from Jamesville, bringing the county its first railroad and making the town its northern terminal. The firm went out of business towards the end of the 19th century, and it has been followed in later years by a number of other wood-products industries, some of the more important of which included Gaines & Kirkman, Foreman & Blades, the Weyerhaeuser corporation, and others.

Opening in 1973 of the Coats & Clark zipper plant marked a departure into a new field for industry in the eastern part of the county. There had been some prior entries in the realm of textiles in other parts of the county, and while the new plant at Jamesville is not exactly a textile operation, it is very closely allied with it, and it is a welcome addition to the economy of the section.

A major forward step taken by Jamesville in recent years was completion of its municipal water system in 1973. It was first brought up at a special meeting of the board in March, 1970, when it was proposed to apply to the Farmers' Home Administration for grants and loans totaling more than $400,000 for installation of both water and sewer systems. After a detailed study, the application later was amended to seek funds only for the water system, which would require the drilling of a deep well, construction of a 100,000-gallon tank, and laying approximately seven miles of mains and pipes.

During the early part of 1971 the FHA approved an outright grant of $90,000 and a loan of $120,000 for the water project, which was designed to serve 550 residents, included in 162 families, plus at least four stores, four service stations, six churches, two schools with 701 pupils, and several other places. A referendum was held at the municipal election in May, 1971, in which citizens of the town voted 125 to 26 in favor of issuing $140,000 in bonds to pay for the installation. Contracts were let a short time later, with the project being completed and put into use in November, 1973. The following year a town official said a study was being made of the feasibility of installing a sewer system, including disposal facilities.

Earliest mail service for the Jamesville section was handled through a post office established at "Gardner's Bridge" on February 23, 1827, with the appointment of Maurice Gardner as postmaster. Exact location of the office is not known, but is believed to have been near the point where the present U. S. Highway 64 crosses Gardner's Creek less than two miles west of Jamesville. Maurice Gardner was postmaster at Gardner's bridge for more than 11 yeras. Others following him before the name was changed to Jamesville in 1855, and the dates they assumed duties of the office, were as follows: John G. Smithwick, July 11, 1838; Ameleck C. Williams, December 28, 1839; Maurice S. Moore, December 9, 1842; A. B. Mariner, February 12, 1850; George W. Ward, April 16, 1850; Jerome B. Sawyer, November 5, 1851; Joseph A. Williams, February 6, 1852; and William J. Harrison, April 15, 1854.

It was during the tenure of William J. Harrison as postmaster that the name of the Gardner's Bridge post office was changed to Jamesville on August 3, 1855, the office itself probably being moved to where the present town is located about the same time. Harrison served only little more than a month longer, however, as Franklin Ward became postmaster on September 27, 1855, serving about four months before being succeeded by Simon Jones on February 1, 1856. There had been a rapid turnover in postmasters prior to this time, several of the earlier ones serving for only a few months before being replaced. After the name was changed to Jamesville, however, those in charge of the office seem to have remained in the position longer on an average than those prior to that time. All these dates are from official Post Office Department records.

Names of the Jamesville postmasters and the dates they began service after Simon Jones—from 1858 to the present—are as follows: Hardy W. Mizell, December 17, 1858; John H. Bell, May 1, 1866; Jesse J. Smith, April 18, 1873; John W. Smith, March 24, 1875; Hardy W. Mizell (second time), May 21, 1877; George L. Kump, April 28, 1885; Lemuel H. Nowell, April 19, 1889; Henry C. Jackson, April 3, 1890; George M. Burras, October 16, 1893; Sherrod H. Spruill, June 8, 1897; Henry C. Jackson (second time), May 6, 1901; Marcellus Stubbs, January 14, 1902; Isaac Jackson, July 15, 1903; Samuel R. Coburn, February 11, 1907; James L. Davenport, January 20, 1922; Robert C. Martin, August 1, 1923; Eli Hoyt Ange, November 1, 1934; Oliver P. Wolfe, October 31, 1954; Mrs. Annie P. Wolfe, April 8, 1957; and Mrs. Jane M. Wolfe, May 12, 1973.

Eli Hoyt Ange had the longest tenure of anyone who ever held the office of postmaster at Jamesville, serving exactly 20 years, from November, 1934, until his retirement on October 31, 1954. Mrs. Annie P. Wolfe was second with something over 16 years, from May 3, 1957, until her retirement in May, 1973. Hardy W. Mizell was postmaster at two different times, the first time for a little less than seven and half years and the second time for almost eight years, making a total of some 15 years. Robert O. Martin had the office for over 11 years; and Maurice Gardner, the first postmaster at Gardner's Bridge, also had a service record of more than 11 years. No others served as many as 10 years. Henry C. Jackson was another who was postmaster at two different times, but his service totaled only a little more than four years.

Before the Rural Free Delivery Service was established near the close of the 19th century, mail for the rural areas was handled through community post offices, many of them located in the stores or residences of the postmasters. There were several of these small post offices in the Jamesville section, later discontinued and mail for their patrons handled by rural routes from that town. They included Dymond City, Amherst, and Dardens. Payment for services of postmasters at these small offices in the early years was very small, usually being the amount of stamp sales.

The Dymond City post office was established April 15, 1878, Abraham Fisher being appointed the first postmaster and serving for a little more than eight years. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Henry P. Nolan, on July 28, 1886, who held the office not quite eight years, until it was abolished April 17, 1894. Mail for the dying village was handled afterwards through Amherst, which was established the same date the Dymond City office was discontinued, William C. Manning serving as postmaster. The Amherst office was located in the home of John W. Manning in what is now known as the Hardison Mill section of Griffins Township, about three miles west of Dymond City and seven miles south of Jamesville. Ashley D. Mizell succeeded Manning as Amherst postmaster on January 11, 1899; and he, in turn, was succeeded by Seth B. Hardison, who held the office until it was discontinued October 31, 1902, following establishment of the first rural route out of Jamesville. The new RFD service became instantly popular, a correspondent for the Williamston newspaper writing on December 31, 1902, that "words of praise for Hon. John H. Small, First District Congressman, by whose efforts we are indebted for this service, are heard on every hand."

In connection with the Amherst office, an obituary of 76-year-old Newton D. Hardison appeared in the Williamston Enterprise following his death in October, 1935, in which it was stated he had been a star mail route carrier between the Jamesville and Amherst post offices some 40 years previously. The article said Hardison carried the mail on his back, daily making the 14-mile round trip between the two offices in all kinds of weather and that "he worked under Willis Moore, colored postmaster at Jamesville, for a number of years." There is no mention in official records of the Post Office Department of a postmaster at Jamesville by that name, but the time and circumstances concerning the star route between Amherst and Jamesville appear to be about right.

The post office at Dardens continued in service for about 40 years after Rural Free Delivery system was established, but finally was abolished July 31, 1942, mail for that section being handled over a rural route from the Jamesville office after that date. The Dardens office was established February 3, 1890, and Charles C. Fagan was the first postmaster. He served for more than seven years before being succeeded by Mary S. McCaskey on April 29, 1897. Thomas H. Gurkin was the third postmaster, assuming duties of the office on August 3, 1899; followed by Mittie E. Fagan on June 5, 1903; Carroll B. Fagan on February 9, 1914; and Mrs. Bernice F. Jordan, who served for more than 20 years, from March 1, 1921, until July 1, 1942, when the office was discontinued.

BLOUNTVILLE

If Dymond City is to be called Martin County's "ghost town," then Blountville may very well be termed the county's "mystery town." Dymond City did not get its start until after the Civil War, and there are numerous references to it in various records and papers. Some of its buildings remained in existence up to the late 1920's or early 1930's before finally being consumed by forest fires. Blountville, on the other hand, was either the second or third town to be incorporated after the county was established, receiving its charter December 29, 1785, final day of the General Assembly that year and the same day that James Town—which later became Jamesville—was established. However, the act of incorporation is the only record of such a town that can be located today. There is no further reference to it in any records or papers; not even a casual mention in a letter or newspaper clipping, and certainly no buildings, ruins or other signs to indicate where such a town might have been located in the past.

According to the act, Blountville was to be established on 70 acres of the land of Whitmel Hill, who was Martin County's member of the state senate in 1885 and who very possibly was a sponsor or author of the bill. The 70 acres contributed by Hill were to be divided into half-acre lots and sold for 40 shillings each following a drawing conducted by the six commissioners named in the act. Names of the commissioners were Joseph Blount Hill, William Williams, Blake Baker Wiggins, John Dawson, John Drew, and Jeremiah Nelmes. Hill's land, known as Kehuky, was located along "Roanok" River in the extreme northern part of the county, probably not very far from the present village of Palmyra, which is now just over the Martin line in Halifax County.

Complete text of the act of incorporation, with spelling, punctuation and capitalization as in State Records of North Carolina for 1785, follows:

"An Act for Erecting a Town on the Lands of Whitmill Hill, in Martin County, on Roanoke River.

"Whereas it is represented to this Assembly that the land of Whitmill Hill, on the south side of Roanoke river, known by the name of Kehuky, in Martin County, is a healthy, pleasant situation, and very conveniently situated for trade and commerce, and the said Whitmill Hill having signified his consent to have seventy acres of the said land laid off for a town, which will greatly promote the trade and navigation of said river:

"I. Be it Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby Enacted by the authority of the same, That the said seventy acres of land be laid off in half-acre lots and streets accordingly, and the same are hereby constituted and established a town, and shall be called by the name of Blountville.

"II. And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That from and after the passing of this Act, that Joseph Blount Hill, William Williams, Blake Baker Wiggins, John Dawson, John Drew and Jeremiah Nelmes, Gentlemen, be and they and every of them be constituted commissioners and trustees for designing, building and carrying on the said town, and they shall stand seized in an indefeasible estate, in fee simple, in the said seventy acres of land as aforesaid, to and for the uses, intents and purposes hereby declared; and the said commissioners or any three of them, shall have full power and authority to meet as often as they shall think necessary, to appoint a public quay on Roanoke river, adjoining the said town for a public landing, as they shall think convenient and necessary.

"Be it Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said Commissioners or a majority of them, shall appoint a time and give public notice thereof, for meeting the subscribers on the said land, for determining the property of each particular lot, which shall be drawn by ballot in a fair manner, by direction and in the presence of a majority of the said commissioners at least, and each subscriber shall be entitled to the lot or lots which shall happen to be drawn for him and correspond with the number contained in the aforesaid plan of the said town; and the said commissioners or a majority of them shall make and execute deeds for granting and conveying the said lots contained in the said town, to the respective subscribers for same, their heirs and assigns forever, and also to all and every other person and persons who shall purchase any other lot or lots in the said town, at the proper cost and charges of said grantee or grantees to whom the same shall be conveyed, and any person claiming any lot or lots in the said town by virtue of such conveyance, shall and may hold and enjoy the same in fee simple.

"IV. And be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the respective subscribers for the said lots shall, within three months after it shall be ascertained to whom each of the said lots doth belong, in manner herein before mentioned, pay and satisfy to the said commissioners the sum of forty shillings for each lot by them subscribed for; and in case of the refusal or neglect of any subscriber to pay the said sum, the said commissioners shall and may commence a suit for the same in their own names, and shall recover judgment with costs.

"And for continuing the succession of the said commissioners, Be it Enacted, That in case of death, refusal to act, or removal out of the State of any of the said commissioners, the surviving or other commissioners, or a majority of them, shall assemble, and from time to time by an instrument in writing under their respective hands and seals, nominate some other person, being an inhabitant or freeholder of said town, in the place of him so dying, refusing to act, or removing out of the State, which new commissioner so nominated and appointed, shall from thenceforth have the same power and authority in all things concerning the matter herein contained, as if he had been expressly nominated and appointed by this Act. (Passed December 29, 1785.)"

HAMILTON

Hamilton was formally established in 1804 and is presently the third oldest town in Martin County. Actually, it was the fourth to be incorporated, having been preceded by Williamston in 1779, Jamesville and Blountville in 1785; but Blountville either faded from the scene or was never actually brought into being, as there is no present record that it ever existed. The act of incorporation of Hamilton says it was formerly called Milton, and the name was changed because there were two towns in the state by the latter name, the other being in Caswell County, creating confusion in delivery of the mail.

The act which established Hamilton did not specify any boundaries, and there is no record that Milton was ever incorporated. However, mention is made of streets being in existence and there was also a provision that no person could be elected or appointed as commissioner unless he was a resident of the town and owner of one or more lots therein. There is no record anywhere of corporate boundaries being set out until a lengthy act was adopted by the General Assembly in 1851, completely revising the charter, spelling out in detail not only the corporate limits but naming the various offices of the town, duties and method of choosing officials, authorizing and limiting the taxing power, and making numerous other provisions for regulation and government of the municipality.

Several reasons have been advanced for selecting the name "Hamilton" for the town. One tongue-in-cheek version, as related by the late Warren H. Biggs, well-known county historian who died a few years ago, says the postmaster at Milton, in this county, told a gray-bearded resident that the post office department wanted the name changed to eliminate some of the confusion in mail deliveries caused by having two towns of the same name in the state. "Ha," said the graybeard, "let the other Milton change its name." Officials then took the "Ha" of the graybeard, added it to "Milton," and came up with Hamilton." At least, that's the way the story goes. Probably a more plausible reason is that the town was named in honor of Alexander Hamilton, first Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, who was fatally wounded in a duel with Aaron Burr in 1804, the same year Hamilton was incorporated.

It is not even certain that Milton was the first name of the settlement which was to later become Hamilton. There were several places in and near the location, called variously Hogstown, Hoggton, Hoggtown, Hoggtown Landing, also a post office known as Clark's Store, which was closed later and its mail sent to "Roanoke." All of these were in the same general locality, some of which existed after Hamilton was incorporated and possibly a few before then.

Hogstown apparently was a thriving river landing located just below the present town of Hamilton prior to 1800, one note from an unidentified source saying it was established in June, 1796. An act adopted by the General Assembly in 1804, same year Hamilton was chartered, repealed part of the acts of 1795 and 1797 and directed "That the separate elections directed to be held for the upper end of Martin at Hogstown, be hereafter held at some convenient place in the town of Hamilton, on the Wednesday preceding the time of holding elections for the purpose of electing representatives to Congress, and likewise for members of the General Assembly...."

Much of the early agriculture of Martin County was centered on the southwestern shore of the Roanoke River in the general vicinity of Hamilton. It was in the upper end of the county that the larger plantations were located, those of the Hills and Williams families constituting settlements in themselves. Hamilton was the chief shipping point and trading center for this very rich back country, and the town had a slow but continued steady record of growth. Official population figures for towns are not available prior to 1880, but Hamilton had a count of 361 that year; and in 1890 it surpassed Williamston and became the largest town in the county, with a population of 718, as compared with 751 in Williamston. In 1900, however, Hamilton dropped back to 493, while Williamston had an increase to 912. Hamilton continued its hold to second place until 1910, when Robersonville moved out ahead of it. With the exception of 1950, Hamilton has remained third in the decennial censuses right up through 1970. Official figures for the town since 1900 follow: 1910, 452; 1920, 474; 1930, 508; 1940, 524; 1950, 514; 1960, 565; and 1970, 579.

The act incorporating Hamilton was included in laws of North Carolina adopted by the General Assembly in 1804, but the exact date of its enactment is not known. Although no boundaries were established by the act, it specified some of the duties of the town's governing board and appointed the first five commissioners as follows: William Williams, James Wiggins, Jesse Jones, John Callaud, and Andrew Joyner. Three of them—Williams, Wiggins, and Joyner—also served the county at different times as representatives in the state house of commons. The text of Chapter XLV, 1804 Laws of North Carolina, entitled "An Act to Incorporate the Town of Hamilton," reads as follows:

"Whereas considerable inconvenience has recently taken place in consequence of two towns having the same name in this state, as regards the postoffice department, in letters being conveyed to one place when designed for the other, to the great injury of many of the good citizens of this state: For the remedy whereof,

"Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That the town in Martin County, known by the name of Milton, shall hereafter be called Hamilton; and that William Williams, James Wiggins, Jesse Jones, John Callaud and Andrew Joyner, be, and are hereby appointed commissioners for said town, and shall have full power and authority to act and do all things which may tend to the regulation and good government of said town, and shall keep the streets in good order and repair, and shall have power to appoint an overseer of the streets, who shall summon the inhabitants of said town to work on the streets three days previous to the time appointed for working, and in case of failure or refusal of any inhabitants so summoned to work on the streets, or to procure a sufficient substitute to perform such work, such inhabitant so failing, shall forfeit and pay half dollar for each and every day's failure or refusal, to be recovered in a summary manner by complaint made by the overseer to any one of the commissioners, such fine to be paid into the hands of the treasurer of said board of commissioners, to be applied to the use of said town, in such manner as a majority of the board shall direct: Provided always, that no person within the limits of said town, shall be compelled to work more than ten days in any one year, or be compelled to work on any road out of the limits of said town; any law, custom or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

"II. Be it further enacted, That the said board of commissioners shall meet on the third Monday of March annually, and after on their own adjournments as often as circumstances shall render it necessary; and at their first meeting shall elect a chairman, who shall preside and vote at their meetings; they shall elect a treasurer who shall give bond to the chairman and his successors in office, in the sum of one hundred dollars, for the faithful discharge of his duty; they shall also elect a clerk, who shall likewise be the register for said town; he shall keep all plats, plans, deeds, grants, records or other public papers relative to said town, and all proceedings heretofore had, and which may be had before the board. The said chairman, treasurer and clerk to be chosen out of the commissioners aforesaid; and in case of the death, neglect, removal or refusal to act, of any of the said commissioners, the clerk shall notify the proprietors of said town, by advertising at three of the most public places therein, at least ten days previous to their meeting, to assemble on a certain day appointed by a majority of the acting commissioners, or in cases of emergency by the chairman, and elect another or others to fill the vacancies, and he or they so elected, shall have the same power and authority as those appointed by this act: Provided always, that no person shall be eligible to be elected a commissioner who is not a resident in said town and owner of one or more lots therein.

"III. And be it further enacted, That the board of commissioners shall have full power and authority to compel the attendance of their members, to appoint a town-sergeant and all other town officers they may think necessary, and to make such by-laws as a majority of them may deem expedient for the good government and well-being of said town, not incompatible with the laws of this State; to grant deeds for the lots to the proprietors in fee-simple; and to order in what manner the streets shall be cleaned and repaired, together with all the public lands within the limits of said town; and if any commissioner shall, after notice or summons signed by the chairman and countersigned by the clerk, such notice or summons to contain the time and place of meeting, and shall be served at least two days previous to such meeting, if then failing to give his attendance, he shall forfeit and pay two dollars, unless prevented by sickness or such other cause as shall be satisfactory to the majority of said board. Such fines and forfeitures to be applied as heretofore directed.

"IV. And be it further enacted, That the town clerk shall register all deeds and grants issued from said board for lots in said town, or from one individual to another, in a book by him kept for that purpose, and receive the sum of forty cents for each, as a full compensation for his services; and such deeds or other papers so recorded, shall be as valid to all intents and purposes as if registered by the county register, as far as respects said town."

The 1804 act of incorporation was amended several times in ensuing years. An amendment was adopted in 1816, twelve years later, adding three to the five originally appointed commissioners. They were William R. Bennett, Eaton Pugh, and Henry Wilkes. Two years later, in 1818, another amendment added three more to the board of commissioners, Joseph J. Williams, James Gardner, and Wilson Sherrod. It also raised the penalty for failure or refusal to work the streets from 50 cents to $1 per day, and increased the bond of the clerk and treasurer of the board of commissioners from $100 to $500 each. It is probable that the additonal commissioners were appointed as replacements for the original members, although the amending acts do not so state. It is known that several of the first board members had served since their appointment as members of the General Assembly, and it is not considered likely that they were able to hold two offices at the same time.

First mention of the town's boundaries is contained in an act of 1851, which also provided for a complete revision of the town's charter, including appointment of five new commissioners, as follows: B. Bennett, P. Clements, Joseph Waldo, Samuel T. Johnson, and I. L. Ledden. Term of office of the board members was set at one year, with elections to be held on the first Thursday of February of each year under supervision of the town constable. Other provisions of the new charter included the following: Levying property tax of up to 30 cents on the $100 valuation of real estate, plus up to $1 poll tax; up to $5 tax on traveling shows, exhibitions, etc.; appointment and setting compensation and bonds for constable and tax collector, police magistrate and treasurer; authorizing the quarantining of all boats, vessels and persons having on board or suffering from smallpox, yellow fever, or other infectious or contagious diseases; and making numerous other regulations and arrangements for the better protection and government of the town and its people.

Then, on March 2, 1887, all previous acts of incorporation and amendments were repealed by a new charter setting up new boundaries, changing the annual election day to the first Monday in May of each year, appointing a new board of commissioners and providing that the government of the town should be in accordance with the general laws of the state for towns and cities not in conflict with the special privileges granted therein. The new board of commissioners was composed of B. G. Howell, R. C. Weatherby, Joseph C. Hoard, George E. Brown, and Thomas H. Pritchard. The office of mayor was mentioned in this act for the first time, the commissioners being authorized to appoint such an officer, along with a "town clerk, constable and such other officers as they may deem necessary." An amendment was adopted by the 1903 General Assembly providing that the "mayor of said town shall be elected in the same manner as the town commissioners are now elected."

Another amendment to the 1887 act of reincorporation was adopted by the 1945 legislature, setting out new boundaries and just about completely revising the charter to bring it into line with laws governing towns and cities at that time. It provided the town officers serving at that time—Henry S. Johnson, Jr., mayor; Henry S. Johnson, Sr., W. C. House, G. A. Oglesby, D. G. Matthews, and R. A. Edmondson, commissioners—should continue to hold office for the remainder of their terms, that elections were to be held bi-ennially in odd-numbered years afterwards, all terms of office to be for two years. The mayor was empowered to hold an inferior court; and the board of commissioners was authorized to levy an ad valorem tax not exceeding $1 on each $100 assessed value of property, and a poll tax not exceeding $1. Other provisions of the act, which is currently in force with a few amendments, are substantially the same as those provided by the constitution and laws of North Carolina governing municipalities generally.

Except for acts incorporating the town or making amendments, in which officials were appointed for the government of Hamilton, no information is available as to who served as commissioners and mayors during those early days. Almost all of the town records and minutes of commissioners' meetings held prior to the 1940's were burned in a fire which destroyed the Salsbury-Johnson store about that time. Records of elected officials are complete from 1947 through 1974, however. They were as follows:

1947: R. Frank Everett, mayor; G. S. Haislip, Joe Cherry, Milton Everett, Larry Everett and D. G. Matthews, commissioners; 1949: R. Frank Everett, mayor; D. G. Matthews, G. S. Haislip, W. F. Thomas,

L. R. Everett and L. D. Roebuck, commissioners; 1951: R. A. Edmondson, mayor; D. G. Matthews, L. D. Roebuck, G. S. Haislip, L. R. Everett and W. F. Thomas, commissioners; 1953: J. O. Stokes, mayor; D. G. Matthews, R. Frank Everett, G. S. Haislip, R. H. Everett and W. F. Thomas, commissioners; 1955: A. O. Everett, mayor; Dewey Stalls, J. O. Stokes, W. F. Thomas, J. A. Cherry and M. G. Beach, commissioners; 1957: J. H. Harrell, mayor; L. R. Everett, Alvin Everett, Asa Harris, A. P. Hyman and W. C. Purvis, commissioners; 1959: J. H. Harrell, mayor; A. O. Everett, W. C. House, A. P. Hyman, W. N. Everett (resigned January 5, 1960, succeeded by R. J. Sydenstricker) and W. C. Purvis;

1961: J. H. Harrell, mayor; W. F. Thomas, W. C. House, D. G. Matthews, Jr., A. O. Everett and R. J. Sydenstricker, commissioners; 1963: J. H. Harrell, mayor; Willie Knox, W. F. Thomas, D. G. Matthews, Jr., L. R. Everett and A. P. Hyman, commissioners; 1965: J. H. Harrell, mayor; D. G. Matthews, Jr., A. P. Hyman, L. R. Everett, J. O. Stokes and Frank Stokes, commissioners; 1967: J. H. Harrell, mayor; W. E. Thomas, Frank Stokes, H. N. Jackson, Mike S. Johnson and Norman Everett, commissioners; 1969: Willie Knox, mayor; Merrill Bynum, Julius Edmondson, Michael Johnson, W. Norman Everett and W. E. Thomas, commissioners; 1971: Willie Knox, mayor; Julius Edmondson, Michael Johnson, J. D. Stokes, W. Norman Everett and W. E. Thomas, commissioners; 1973: Willie Knox, mayor; W. Norman Everett, Michael Johnson, Roy Everett, Paul Johnson and Don W. Leigh, commissioners.

In addition to the elected officials above, late in 1974 Jesse B. Everett had been town administrator for a number of years; Mrs. Nancy White had been clerk since September, 1974; and L. T. Hollis was chief of police. At the same time, Morris Lynch supervised the water, street, and electrical departments of the town, in addition to serving as chief of the fire department and rescue squad and as assistant police chief when needed. Prior to Mrs. White, others who served as town clerk in recent years included Mrs. Belle Suits, J. B. Everett, Whit Purvis, Alvin Everett, J. A. Cherry and H. S. Johnson, Sr.

Following its incorporation in 1804, Hamilton had a slow but fairly steady rate of progress and growth. Population of the town at that time is not known, and figures are not available for individual towns in the very early decennial censuses. The first to be reported was 1860, when Hamilton had 119 white and 44 free Negroes, for a total of 163, with the number of slaves not listed. In 1870 the population of the town was quoted at around 200; in 1880 the total was 369, of which 232 were white and 137 colored. Official census figures for 1890 are not available, having been lost or destroyed, but newspaper reports about that time gave Hamilton its highest population, 781, and it was said to be larger than Williamston. Ten years later, in 1900, the official count for Hamilton was 493, a loss of 288 if the 1890 report was correct. - There was a little further drop to 452 in the census of 1910; but after that there was a steady gain each decade except one in the official figures, as follows: 474 in 1920, 508 in 1930, 524 in 1940, 514 in 1950, 565 in 1960 and 579 in 1970.

There is a lengthy history, dating back before 1800, connected with early post offices which served the present Hamilton area. First post office in the section was established June 22, 1796, at Hoggtown, believed to have been located about a mile down the Roanoke River from the present site of Hamilton, with David Clark as postmaster. It is presumed he was a relative of Abram Clark, who owned the land where Hamilton now stands. Later the office at Hoggtown was closed and renamed "Clark's Store," exact location of which has not been determined, since it afterwards was called "Roanoke," believed to have been located in the upper part of the county near Palmyra. All these changes took place during the first part of the 19th century.

Before Hoggtown was discontinued as a post office, Kenneth Clark was appointed postmaster in the latter part of 1800. He was succeeded by William M. Clark about July 1, 1803; and then Kenneth Clark was reappointed postmaster August 24, 1804, only nine days after the Hoggtown office name was changed to Clark's Store. Kenneth Clark served nearly 15 years, from August 25, 1804, to April 20, 1819, when William M. Clark was again named to the postmastership, the two Clarks apparently alternating in the office up to that point. William Wilson succeeded him on April 23, 1823, but it is not certain how long he held the office, as sometime later William M. Clark was again postmaster at Clark's Store, the date he assumed the position being left blank the postal service's official "Register of Appointments of Postmasters." At any rate, Luman Whittlesey—a former headmaster of the Williamston Academy—became postmaster at Clark's Store on June 9, 1835. The next entry shows name of the office was changed to "Roanoke" on January 10, 1842, and Thomas Jones became postmaster, holding the office until it was discontinued January 6, 1851.

There is some doubt as to the exact date the Hamilton post office was established and the name of its first postmaster. One report has the office being set up April 20, 1819, about the time William M. Clark became postmaster at Clark's Store, and different records have him serving at both places about the same time. Justin C. Edward became postmaster at Hamilton April 28, 1825, and served until

February 14, 1828. From that date forward the records are in agreement, names of postmasters and their tenure in the office being as follows:

William R. Bennet, February 14, 1828-1831; Exum L. Lowe, September 28, 1831-1835; Francis P. Redmond, February 7, 1835-1838; Lawrence Johnson, February 1, 1838-1841; Joseph Waldo, June 16, 1841-1845; Bryant Bennett, August 12, 1845-1849; T. W. Ward, January 27, 1849, through the entire Civil War period until 1866; Ebenezer Price, January 20, 1866; William W. Gardner, July 26, 1866-1875; James L. Barnhill, March 24, 1875-1878; William W. Gardner, Jr., February 20, 1878-1880; James R. Williams, October 27, 1880-89; Joseph B. Hooker,, June 21, 1889-93; Joseph T. Waldo, April 6, 1893-97; Samuel L. Moore, May 29, 1897-07; Mrs. Sallie E. Ewell, July 16, 1907-37; Mrs. Anne R. Ewell, February 21, 1937-64; Mrs. Catherine E. Harrell, April 30, 1964-66; Joseph A. Cherry, April 22, 1966, through 1974.

Mrs. Sallie E. Ewell had the longest tenure in office of any of the Hamilton postmasters, serving from July 16, 1907, until her death on February 13, 1937, about 29½ years. She was succeeded by her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Anne R. Ewell, who assumed the office February 21, 1937, and held it until her retirement April 30, 1964, a little over 27 years. Combined service of the two ladies was nearly 57 years as postmaster at Hamilton.

Shortly after Hamilton was established, water transportation on the Roanoke River created both travel and trade and this brought about the need for the Darden Hotel, which was built around 1820. A handsome, simple building, it has been kept in fairly good condition in the ensuing 150 years, and is presently being restored by a county foundation. It was said to have been used as a hospital during the Civil War, but this has never been completely authenticated by researchers.

During the 1840's, Prof. James H. Horner conducted a private academy in the town for classical education of male and female students. He moved to Oxford during the following decade and founded the famous Horner's Military School there. His prestige was such that it might have been concluded that an education at Horner's was a prerequisite for a position of leadership in North Carolina during the latter part of the past century. Another educator of note in the Hamilton area about that time was Stephen W. Outterbridge, who taught both in the town and at a private school held at his ancestral home, "Mimosa," near Butler's Bridge, just south of Hamilton.

Other aspects of an improved community life began to develop around the middle of the nineteenth century. A new Methodist church was established in the town in 1847. The frame structure, located on the southeast corner of Main and Front Streets, was burned in 1860, according to a brief history published in 1970 by Samuel W. Johnson, Hamilton native, who was then practicing law in Rocky Mount. In 1850, a charter was issued for Conoho Masonic Lodge, No. 131, and it continued in existence for around 100 years. First officers were P. P. Clements, master; T. W. Ward, senior warden; and S. C. Hyman, junior warden. The charter was finally surrendered about the middle of the 20th century, some of the Hamilton members going to Skewarkee Lodge, No. 90, in Williamston, while others joined Stonewall, No. 296, in Robersonville.

Continuing the town's growth as a religious and fraternal center, the Methodists built a new church in 1861, an imposing columned structure on what is presently Railroad Street. It was torn down around the turn of the century, and the building presently in use on Front Street was occupied in May, 1904. During the 1860's, St. Martin's Episcopal Church was established, largely through the efforts of the Boyle and Martin families. Due to the benevolence of some un-known philanthropist, the church imported stained-glass windows for the chancel from England. Other churches were established following the Civil War, including the Hamilton Missionary Baptist Church, largely through efforts of J. Augustus Whitley and R. B. Salsbury, Confederate veterans, in 1873; Hamilton Primitive Baptist in 1889, Hamilton Church of Christ in 1946, and Pentecostal Holiness in 1963. Colored religious groups include Ebenezer A.M.E. Zion Methodist, 1884; Sycamore Missionary Baptist, overlooking the Roanoke River in 1892; and Hamilton Holiness Church of God in Christ, 1928. The building of new churches around the middle of the 19th century and after the Civil War gives evidence that the town was not only growing, but—due to the churches' then unique importance—was offering its citiznes increasing social, cultural, and religious outlets.

When the war began, Hamilton citizens rallied to the southern cause. Many of them joined the Hamilton Guards, a company led by Capt. Lycurgus L. Clements (now buried in the old Methodist Graveyard). Practically all members of that company, along with the Roanoke Guards of Williamston, were captured in the fall of Hatteras, very shortly after the beginning of the war. Thereafter, following their exchange, most of the men were absorbed into the 17th North Carolina Regiment.

Because of its position near strategic Rainbow Banks on the Roanoke River, Hamilton was a center of war-time activity. The Confederate ram "Albemarle" was built upriver a short ways at

Edwards Ferry in Halifax County, and Union forces were justifiably fearful that more of the rams were being assembled at or near that point. The river was heavily patrolled by Union gunboats, and a number of raiding parties were put ashore, one of them capturing plans for construction of a new iron-clad ram. All the activitiy was not limited to the river, however. The town suffered damage from-shelling and the raids, and the nearness of Fort Branch kept some land maneuvering going on in the area. At one time during the war, the Sherrod House, about a mile south of the town, was commandeered for use as headquarters for troops stationed in the area.

Although it suffered to some extent from raiding and shelling it underwent by Union forces during the war, Hamilton was not hurt so badly that it could not recover. As a matter of fact, the half century which followed was the period of its greatest growth and development, in comparison with other places in the county. The town was served regularly by three steamship lines. Ledgers and records of Bryant Bennett show that the volume of his business exceeded $200,000 annually for a number of years, an immense sum for those pre-income-tax days. Archibald Staton, a wealthy cotton broker, had additional places of business in Norfolk, Va., and Georgia; and there were a number of other substantial business establishments there, including those of Sherrod-Baker, R. H. Everett, Bryan & Robertson, Slade, Jones & Company, the latter, operating as Slade, Rhodes & Company, continuing its operations until 1969.

Frank Hitch, originally from Pennsylvania, who had a plant in Suffolk, Va., started a boom in the lumber industry in the section some 20 years after the war by locating what was considered at that time to be a tremendous sawmill operation in Hamilton. He built a logging railroad from the mill to Princeville, just across the Tar River from Tarboro, and it was franchised and used as a common carrier for a time. Hitch also had a number of river vessels to utilize water transportation for moving his lumber products to markets in the north. The Boyle family, about that time or a little later, operated a shingle factory, also making barrel staves and hoops.

A Raleigh newspaper in 1884 reported that Hamilton was then the largest town in Martin County, with a population of more than 800, and said it doubtless would have become the seat of county government except for its location being in the extreme northern part of the county. It was about this time that small towns really came into their own, as they were able to offer goods and services which in later years were to be found only in the larger places after development of the automobile and hard-surfaced roads.

Practically all of the early industry of the Hamilton area was based on lumber or other forest products. A new field was opened in September, 1900, when C. H. Baker and Archibald Sherrod founded the Hamilton Pants Manufacturing Company, later moving its operations to Williamston and still later to Greensboro. Baker's son, Robert W. Baker, in 1942 was chairman of the board of Blue Bell Overall Company in Greensboro, one of the leading firms in that field. Sherrod moved to High Point and became one of the pioneers in the furniture manufacturing industry there.

Thomas Darden, member of a prominent Hamilton family who became a vice president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company with headquarters in Wilmington in his latter years, wrote interestingly in 1942 about recollections of his early years in his native town. He said public schools were practically unknown in the days of his childhood, his sole experience in that respect being for a period of two months one summer when he walked two miles in the country to such a school. However, he said, the town was blessed with good private schools; and, after the primary grades conducted by some "estimable ladies," there was a school for older children, "conducted by Mr. Outterbridge, an elderly man who had taught Mr. Horner, who afterwards established the Horner Military Academy at Oxford." Outterbridge was a wonderful mathematician, the railroad executive stating that he still felt "indebted to him for the knowledge he imparted." Subsequently the Hamilton Academy was established and conducted by Professor Duckett with a corps of four or five teachers, Darden adding that the community "was fortunate in having this excellent school, and it drew pupils from many of the surrounding counties, a number of them being grown men."

According to Mr. Darden, he received his start in railroading by learning telegraphy while employed for three years at the drug store of Bryan & Robertson in Hamilton, where the office was located. The telegraph line was a private one owned by G. Charles Lamb of Williamston and was first constructed from that town to Hamilton and afterwards to Windsor. Darden attributed lack of railroad facilities in Hamilton as one of the principal reasons for a slower rate of growth after 1900 than other county towns which were located on rail lines.

Private bankers and capitalists financed the early business and commercial undertakings of the section, and it was not until 1907 that the first bank was organized, the Bank of Hamilton receiving its charter that year. C. H. Baker was elected by the stockholders to be the first president of the institution, which was capitalized at $10,000, afterwards increased to $25,000. Some time later, R. W. Salsbury, as president, and F. L. Haislip, Jr., as cashier and chief executive officer, assumed direction of the bank and ably conducted its affairs for many years. It was one of the relatively few banking institutions to weather the depression years, later being acquired by the Guaranty Bank & Trust Company, which, in turn, became part of the Wachovia system. Don Leigh, manager of the Hamilton Wachovia unit in 1974, recently came across a number of old papers related to the bank's early operations, including the original charter, invoices, statements, canceled notes, checks and similar items with signatures of many persons who were prominent in the upper part of the county during the early part of this century.

Electricity came to Hamilton in 1925, when the town issued bonds in the amount of $25,000 for the purchase and installation of what was then known as a "Delco Light Plant." It was designed to furnish electric energy from storage batteries capable of being recharged by a gasoline-powered generator. The batteries soon went to the bad, and the generator had to be operated continuously to furnish current, used then only at night for lighting purposes. Not too long afterwards, the town built a power line to Oak City, and the two towns then jointly extended the line to Hobgood to connect with another line to Scotland Neck, all of the towns then receiving their current from the municipal plant at Tarboro. Around the mid-thirties Hamilton signed a contract with an REA affiliate, Edgecombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation, for the wholesale purchase of electricity to be resold at retail to the town's customers, the town retaining ownership of the distribution system. This plan remains in effect until the present, although the town has purchased its current in recent years from the Virginia Electric & Power Company.

Hamilton was the first town in the county with a population of less than 1,000 to have a municipal water system. Exact date of the first installation is not known, but in 1956 a deep well was drilled at the site of the present elevated tank, with a pump and 5,000-gallon pressure tank being installed to serve a more or less limited number of customers. Prior to this the town had two pumps, in the center of intersections at Front and Main Streets and Front and Liberty Streets. Pipes were run from these pumps to a few residences nearby. In April, 1967, the Farmers' Home Administration approved Hamilton's application for a loan of $170,000 and a grant of $90,000 for improvements to the water system and installation of a sewage system. About a month later, a contract was let for 100,000-gallon elevated tank and concrete foundation at a cost of $34,675. It has since been completed and put into use, but no further steps have been taken for installation of the sewage system there.

Authorized by the board of commissioners at a meeting on August 12, 1954, the Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department was organized that month, and its first piece of equipment—a Studebaker truck—was delivered August 25, 1954. James Staton Ayers was the first chief, with Morris Lynch and Bud Bullock as assistant chiefs. Other officers and members were: Don Matthews, Jr., president; Pete Roane, vice president; Hilton Everett, treasurer; James Lee, secretary; Joe Cherry, Abner Bland, Jim Scott, Johnnie Scott, Frank Everett, Norman Everett, Henry Johnson, Jr., Alvin Everett, Henry Haislip, and Dewey Stalls. Four of the original charter members were still active 20 years later, in 1974.

The fire department was more or less an independent organization at first, although it received some financial support from the municipality; but on March 3, 1962, in order to comply with regulations of the North Carolina Inspection and Rating Bureau, the town commissioners adopted a resolution taking over control and operation of the department. The firemen still elect their own members and the chief, but their selections are subject to review and approval by the town board.

The department now has about 20 members, as also does the Hamilton Rescue Squad, which was organized in the early 1960's, with Morris Lynch serving as chief of both volunteer organizations. In 1974 John Scott, Jr., was the assistant chief, John Scott, Sr., was president, and Michael Johnson treasurer of the firemen. The fire department at that time had two pieces of motorized equipment, a modern new truck costing about $12,000 having been purchased in 1960; and the rescue squad had an ambulance, all being kept on call in the municipal building. Members of both units have volunteered much time in training sessions, and both organizations have provided exceptional service to the entire community and maintain a high degree of efficiency.

Utilizing funds allocated by the state, Hamilton embarked on a program of street improvements in March, 1953, the first being installation of curb and guttering along Front Street. The program continues, with most of the principal streets having been black topped in subsequent years. Other improvements include construction of the town hall, contract for which was let in 1970, with the building being completed and occupied in September, 1971. In addition to quarters for the town clerk, police and fire department, rescue squad and the commissioners' meeting room, two fire trucks and the rescue ambulance are kept on call there at all times. Contract price for the structure was $39,865, and it was completed and paid for without a bond issue.

In addition to elected officials, Hamilton set up a zoning commission on February 6, 1962, with appointment of the following members: G. A. Oglesby, Michael Johnson, Alton Harrell, James Lee, and Hilton Everett. In December, 1970, the town board made a declaration that a housing authority was needed, and preparations were started to apply for a low-cost housing grant. The board later reconsidered, however, and the applications were withdrawn.

Many of the names which were familiar to early residents of the Hamilton area are no longer to be found there. Among those easily recognizable as being from that area at one time, but no longer, were Hill, Williams, Bennett, Cotten, Sherrod, Salsbury, Gladstone, Anthony, Darden, Cloman, Matthews, Rhodes, Lamb, Long, Watts, Boyle, Sebrell, Waldo and Martin, among others. In his 1942 writings, Thomas Darden recalled numerous names of families who lived in the town when he was growing up and after he became a young man, embracing a sizable portion of the last quarter of the past century, stating they included many of those mentioned above, as well as others such as Gardner, Ward, Clark, Hooker, Pippin, Crofton, Everett, Baker, Grimes, Edmondson, Pritchard, Davenport, Hyman, Bryan, Robertson, Ewell, Hobbs, Purvis, and Howell. There are still some residents in the section with names included in the list cited by Darden, but others have faded from the records and are not to be found in the community at present.

Frank Alton Armstrong, Jr., who was born at Hamilton in 1902, attained the highest military rank ever held by any native of Martin County when he was promoted to lieutenant general in the United States Air Force following distinguished service in both the European and Pacific theaters during World War II. As a brigadier general, he commanded the first daylight heavy bombing missions over Germany and Nazi-occupied France following entrance of the United States into the conflict. He contributed materially to destruction of the German ability to wage war and, then was transferred to the Pacific theater, where he led a number of B-29 bombing missions from Guam over Japan. After the war, his final pioneering achievement as an Air Force officer was completion of the first polar flight from Alaska to Norway. He later retired from the service and lived in Dunn, where he died in 1969.

Accompanying the break-up of the huge plantations along Roanoke River in the upper part of the county which began after the Civil War and continued on into this century, along with a decline of cotton as the major crop of the section, Hamilton's importance as a shipping, trading, and financial center for the northern end of Martin County began to dwindle. Lack of rail facilities may have been a contributing factor, but it was the motor vehicle and paved roads that sounded the death knell for river transportation; and the depression years struck another heavy blow to all phases of agriculture, further reducing the influence of Hamilton in county affairs.

However, the economy of the town and northern part of the county received a tremendous boost in July, 1961, when a formal announcement was made from the office of Governor Terry Sanford in Raleigh that Beaunit Mills, Inc., a New York corporation which had several mills in the Piedmont section of the state, had signed agreements and contracts for location of a multi-million dollar textile plant at Hamilton to employ 500 or more persons. The project had been under consideration for some time, and a cash grant of more than $106,000, including over $53,000 from the Hamilton area alone, was pledged by county people to induce the firm to locate the plant in that section.

Work was started shortly afterwards at the 47-acre site just southeast of the town limits, construction being completed and operations begun about eight months later, in February, 1962. It was announced that the plant was equipped for knitting, dyeing and finishing operations. About 10 years later, the firm announced plans for an addition which would provide for a substantial increase in number of persons employed. Operations of the Beaunit firm constitute an increasingly important economic factor for the Hamilton section, not only in the employment it provides, but the expansion of all facets of the business, civic, social, religious and cultural life of the community.

An object of considerable civic pride in Hamilton is the Baptist Home for the Aging, which was opened there in the summer of 1962, following a lengthy period of conferences and negotiations with officials of the Baptist State Convention and several of its subordinate groups. Plans for the institution had been under consideration for about four years before it was announced in 1961 that the home would be located there. This had followed a pledge made in 1957 by D. G. Matthews, Sr., prominent Hamilton business executive and landowner, to contribute $50,000 and a site for such an undertaking. Plans for the project became a reality February 9, 1961, with a ground-breaking ceremony to mark the beginning of work on the $300,000 plant. Construction was completed and the first 15 residents were received at the home during the week of June 3, 1962. The Rev. James B. Dailey was the first supervisor, and the home has become an integral part of the community since that time. Its operations and services are under the direction of North Carolina Baptist Homes, Inc., sponsors by the Baptist State Convention.

ROBERSONVILLE

Robersonville was the first municipality in Martin County to be incorporated which was not located on the Roanoke River and not dependent on that waterway as its chief means of communication with the outside world. Although the railroad line on which the town was to be located had not been completed and was not to be put into operation until some 12 years later, it was in anticipation of such an event that the charter was sought. The act of incorporation, Chapter 29 of the Private Laws of 1869-70, entitled "An Act to Incorporate the Town of Robersonville, in the county of Martin," was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly on February 16, 1870, and reads as follows:

"Sec. 1. The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact, That a town is hereby established in the county of Martin, by the name and style of Robersonville.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town of Robersonville shall be as follows, to wit: Beginning at a stake in Staton Everett's field, running thence south 1½ west 154 poles to a stake in George D. Roberson's field, thence south 76½ east 276 poles to a stake, thence north 1½ east 154 poles to a stake, thence north 76½ west 276 poles to the beginning.

"Sec. 3. That the government of the said town of Robersonville shall be vested in the following persons, to wit: William W. Roberson as mayor, and Henry D. Roberson, Staton Everett, and Eli Askew as commissioners, and their successors in office.

"Sec. 4. That the mayor and commissioners aforesaid, to wit: William W. Roberson and Henry D. Roberson, Staton Everett and Eli Askew, and their successors in office, shall be and they are hereby incorporated and constituted a body politic and corporate, by the name and style of the mayor and commissioners of the town of Robersonville, and by that name and style shall be perpetual succession and a common seal, with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and powers granted to and vested in corporations by the laws of North Carolina.

"Sec. 5. That the mayor and commissioners of said town of Robersonville are hereby granted authority and power to lay out and open streets in the corporate limits of said town, and if necessary so to do, to condemn land for such purpose.

"Sec. 6. That the persons herein named as mayor and commissioners shall continue in office until the first Monday in January, 1871, at which time, and on the first Monday of January of each year thereafter, there shall be elections for mayor and commissioners, held and conducted by persons not exceeding three in number, appointed by the acting mayor and commissioners.

"Sec. 7. That this act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

Robersonville was one of the few towns in eastern North Carolina to be incorporated before it was established as a post office. As a general rule, a store or some other central point for the delivery of mail would be designated as a post office, and then a village or trading center would develop around it before any consideration was given to setting up a local governmental unit. Robersonville was to be the exception. Without doubt, steps to incorporate it were taken in mistaken anticipation of the immediate completion of the railroad between Williamston and Tarboro, work on which had been resumed a year or two earlier. However, the rail line was not to be completed until the fall of 1882, over 12 years later, although those sponsoring the incorporation did not know it at that time. The town had a population of possibly 100 when it was established, and it was to be more than four more years before it had a post office.

Despite all handicaps, the town has had a fairly steady growth up to the present, as shown by the decennial census reports. In only one decade has a population loss been recorded, the 1930 count of 1,181 being 18 less than the 1920 figure of 1,199. Starting with 104, when the post office was established in 1874, the official census give the town's population in successive decades as follows: 1880, 148 (88 white, 60 colored), 1890, 235; 1900, 275; 1910, 616; 1920, 1,199; 1930, 1,181; 1940, 1,407; 1950, 1,414; 1960, 1,684; and 1970, 1,910.

Although Henry D. Roberson is generally regarded as the "Father of Robersonville," the municipality actually appears to have been named for him and his two brothers, William W. Roberson and George O. Roberson, who, with Staton Everett, were sponsors of the town's incorporation in 1870. William W. Roberson was the first mayor, and Henry D. Roberson was a member of the first board of commissioners, the other two being Staton Everett and Eli Askew.

Possibly one reason why Henry D. Roberson is more prominently identified with the early history of Robersonville than his brothers was due to his connection with construction of the railroad, which, it was thought, would be completed about the time the town was incorporated. He was a stockholder, director, and one of the foremost promoters of the line from Williamston to Tarboro, which had several names. It was first known as the Williamston & Tarboro Railroad was completed and began operations as the Seaboard & Raleigh Railroad Company, but had its name changed to Albemarle & Raleigh shortly afterwards to avoid being confused with another railroad company called "Seaboard." In addition to being a stockholder and director, Roberson also contracted to do much of the grading, obtaining crossties, and laying track in the Robersonville section. He was county representative in the General Assembly of 1879 and secured passage of legislation which enabled the railroad to be completed in 1882. Then he was host at a gala holiday occasion in Robersonville on August 24, 1882, welcoming the first train from Williamston after completion of the line between the two towns. It was nearly two months later, October 17, 1882, before the first train was to be operated over the entire route from Tarboro to Williamston.

The three Roberson brothers were sons of William Roberson, born in 1790, their original home being located in what is now the southwestern part of the town. The first American ancestor of most of the Robersons who now live in this section of the county was Henry Robason, said to have been born in 1710 in England. He emigrated to Virginia and later moved to what is now Washington County, where he died on February 6, 1778. A son, Henry Robertson, was born in 1747 and became a member of the Martin County Committee of Safety in 1775. He enlisted in Dawson's Company of the 7th North Carolina Continental Line from the Halifax District in 1777 and served as a soldier probably throughout the Revolutionary War. He died in Martin Couny in 1828. One of his sons, William, married Sally Wynn and was father of the three brothers for whom Robersonville was named.

Following the town's incorporation in 1870, a number of special acts have been passed in succeeding legislatures, some in relatively recent years, providing for extension of the boundaries and making other amendments to the original charter. One of the more important was a complete revision of the charter made in February, 1905. It increased the number of commissioners from three to five and lengthened their terms of office from one to two years. It spelled out in detail a number of regulations for government of the town, authorizing the governing body to widen, straighten, lay off and establish new streets or discontinue old ones, and to require each citizen to either work on the streets up to six days a year or pay 60 cents per day for failure to work. It also provided for levying taxes for municipal purposes not exceeding 66 two-thirds cents per $100 property valuation, plus a poll tax not exceeding $2, and license taxes for various businesses, trades, and professions. Attorney A. R. Dunning was mayor of Robersonville when this act was adopted in 1905, and it is presumed he was author of it. He moved to Williamston in 1908.

Names of mayors and other officials of Robersonville prior to 1902 have been very difficult to obtain. The act of incorporation in 1870 named the following as members of the first governing group: William W. Roberson, mayor; Henry D. Roberson, Staton Everett, and Eli Askew, commissoners. Next official record is for 1902, when the town had the following officers: J. C. Robertson, mayor; G. D. Roberson, J. K. Ross, and J. H. Roberson, commissioners; G. D. Roberson, clerk; J. H. Roberson, treasurer; I. R. Roberson, tax collector; D. R. Perkins, chief of police. In that same year J. C. Roberson, A. E. Gray, and W. A. Everett were members of the local school committee; S. W. Outterbridge was principal of the public school; T. H. Whichard was postmaster; and J. W. Andrews was the railroad and express agent. That the town was well named may be seen in the frequency of the name "Roberson" in the above list, when the total population was about 275. The 1974 telephone directory of Robersonville had 61 individual listings under that name, plus one Robertson and one Robinson.

Stephen L. Ross was elected mayor in 1903, along with J. K. Ross, A. S. Roberson, and R. L. Smith as commissioners. Commissioner Smith was appointed treasurer and Joseph Bullock chief of police. A. R. Dunning, a young attorney who had located in Robersonville, was elected mayor and served a couple of terms about this time, Stephen L. Ross returning to the office around 1907 and remaining there until he was appointed postmaster in April, 1913. It was about 1913 that J. L. Roberson became mayor, serving until 1916, when he was succeeded by J. G. Barnhill, and he held the office until 1921. William Wiley Keel became mayor in 1922, some saying that Will Ross was elected prior to this but died before taking office.

Records are more complete from this point on. G. H. Cox became mayor in 1923, and served until 1927, being succeeded by E. G. Anderson, who held the office for two years. C. M. Hurst was elected in 1929 and continued as mayor for about 10 years before giving way to Henry Staton Everett in June, 1939. So far as can be determined, Mr. Everett was mayor longer than any other man in the history of the town, holding the office more than 21 years, until his death on November 1, 1960. Charles R. Gray served the unexpired portion of

Mr. Everett's term, and Sherwood L. Roberson then served one term after being elected in 1961. Ben H. James was mayor from 1963 to 1965, being succeeded by Vance L. Roberson, who resigned because of ill health in December, 1967. L. Wilson Wynne was named his successor and has held the office since that time.

Records of persons serving as town commissioners are even more sketchy than those of mayor. Except for those appointed in the act of incorporation, no mention of others has been found prior to 1902, when a newspaper lists J. K. Ross, A. S. Roberson, and R. L. Smith as commissioners. The North Carolina Yearbook for 1903 says the commissioners then were G. D. Roberson, J. K. Ross, and J. H. Roberson; while A. S. Roberson, J. K. Ross, and R. L. Smith are listed as commissioners in the yearbooks for 1904, 1905, and 1906. There are discrepancies in these reports, however, as an amendment made to the town charter in 1905 provided for election of five commissioners that year and thereafter at two-year intervals. The first time the yearbook names five commissioners is in its 1907 edition, when it listed A. S. Roberson, Wiley Rogerson, J. G. Barnhill, G. D. Roberson, and R. J. Nelson in those offices. A newspaper article two years later reported the following were elected in 1907 and reelected in 1909: J. H. Roberson, Jr., R. L. Smith, J. G. Barnhill, H. H. Pope, and Wiley Rogerson. An unidentified different source lists four of the five commissioners last named above—J. H. Roberson, Jr., J. G. Barnhill, H. H. Pope, and Wiley Rogerson—as being commissioners from 1909 to 1913, but does not name the fifth member.

Several Robersonville citizens have held the offices of both mayor and commissioners at different times, one of the earliest of record being C. M. Hurst, who was mayor for a good many years, plus serving as commissioner on another occasion. Vance L. Roberson had the longest tenure of anyone in the service of the town, being a member of the board of commissioners for 28 years prior to becoming mayor and continuing in that position for three and a half years before retiring in December, 1967, on account of ill health. His total record eclipses that of N. C. Everett, who was mayor for more than 21 years between 1939 and 1960. Several men served as both commissioner and mayor during the current century, and it is very probable the same was the case before the 1900's. L. Wilson Wynne began his third term as mayor in January, 1974, after having previously served some six years as commissioner. Sherwood L. Roberson was elected commissioner three times and served one two-year term as mayor.

Charles H. Gray was elected commissioner 10 times, serving for 20 years between 1943 and 1963. Gilbert Smith was a member of the board for 14 years, I. Mayo Little, Charles L. Wilson, and Dr. W. E. Ward for 12 years each. Others who served multiple terms since 1935 included J. R. Crandell, 8 years; Irving L. Smith, Irving L. Smith, Jr., George McRorie, H. H. Pope, and William A. Cherry, 6 years each; A. R. Osborne, H. G. Norman, Claude Wilson, and B. Alton Rodgers, 4 years each; and the following have served single two-year terms each over the same period: J. C. Keel, Eli Rodgers, John Gray Taylor, J. L. Williams, W. W. Green, Buck Manning, Robert B. Nelson, and Jimmy Rogers.

Robersonville adopted the non-partisan plurality method for its municipal elections in 1973, eliminating party primaries and nominations required previusly and greatly simplifying the manner of choosing its officers. Elections are now held in November of odd-numbered years, the officials assuming their duties the following January. The first election by the new method was held November 6, 1973, when L. Wilson Wynne was chosen mayor and Claude R. Wilson Irving Smith, William A. Cherry, Jimmy Rogers, and Johnny Ray Crandell were elected to the board of commissioners.

Ralph Mobley, the present town administrator and clerk to the board of commissioners, has held that office since December 1, 1960. James S. Simpson had been director of utilities for more than 16 years. Other appointive officers who were in office during the latter part of 1974 include Charles Arvestus Long, chief of police; Mike Roberson, chief of the fire department; Sam H. Rawls, rescue squad captain; and Paul D. Roberson, town attorney for many years. In addition to the chief, there are now four patrolmen and a dispatcher in the police department.

Robersonville's administrative officers are now housed in the buliding on Main Street which was the former home of Wachovia Bank & Trust Company, the bank having presented the structure to the town in 1973 after moving into its new quarters across the street. Construction was begun in 1974 on a modern new municipal building, located at the intersection of Main and Second Streets, which will be headquarters for the police department, fire department, rescue squad and public library. It was scheduled to be completed and occupied during 1975, with the administrative offices continuing at their present location.

Privately owned and operated, the first electric plant in Robersonville was built around the year 1914, according to older citizens of the town. At first current was provided only for lighting purposes, the plant being operated only in the evening hours, from early dark to about midnight. Some time after the first plant was destroyed by fire, the town purchased the distribution system, employing B. F. Coburn for maintenance and service work. A line was constructed to connect with Virginia Power & Electric Company lines at Bethel, providing full-time service, with the town buying current wholesale from the power firm and retailing it to its citizens.

This continued until around 1940, when Robersonville officials contracted for power at a lower rate from Greenville, a new line being constructed to connect directly with the Greenville municipal installation. This arrangement continued until sometime after World War II, when a new contract was made with Virginia Electric & Power Company, and the town has since obtained its current from that firm. Over the entire 60-year period since electricity was introduced in Robersonville, the distribution and maintenance service has been supervised by but three men—B. F. Coburn, Leland Coburn, and J. S. Simpson.

The town's water and sewage-disposal systems were installed in 1924, but have been enlarged and expanded considerably since then. Bonds were issued for the first installation, which included a 100,000-gallon elevated tank. In 1968, it was necessary to issue $150,000 in bonds for extension of the water and sewer lines. The following year, it was announced that two large industrial plants had decided to locate near the town, and it was necessary to construct a 200,000-gallon elevated tank a little more than a mile east of the town to take care of their needs and probable additional expansion of water and sewer facilities.

Municipal officials then began an active study of plans to modernize and bring the sewage-disposal system into compliance with health and environmental regulations adopted in recent years by state and federal governments. A $350,000 bond issue for water, street and sewer improvements was voted in 1972, but prospective costs incresed faster than plans could be developed, and it has been impossible to get the program underway. Estimates of cost of modernizing the sewage-disposal system have been revised upwards several times, and near the close of 1974 it was believed plans then under consideration would require a total of nearly two million dollars. Even by counting on substantial grants and financial assistance from environmental-protection agencies, it is anticipated that the cost to the town will be around a half million dollars.

It may be noted here that 14 of the 18 miles of streets in Robersonville have been surfaced mostly in the years since the so-called "Powell Bill" funds became available. "Powell Bill" refers to an act of the General Assembly adopted in relatively recent years allocating to municipalities, on a basis of population and street mileage, a percentage of funds collected by the state gasoline tax which may be used only for traffic control and improvement of streets.

Robersonville's volunteer fire department was formally organized in 1924, about the time the town completed installation of its water system. William Gray, chief of police at the time, was also made first chief of the fire department, composed of about 25 or 30 men, who were provided some training after purchase of the first truck, a 1924 model American-LaFrance pumper. Prior to that, fire fighting was done by a so-called "bucket brigade," comprised of practically every able-bodied man in town, who lined up and passed buckets of water from hand to hand for pouring on the blaze, a method which was not too effective under the most favorable conditions. Since that first truck, the town has purchased three additional units of motorized equipment, two modern pumpers and a tanker truck for use in areas where no hydrants are available. The original American La-France truck is kept in fairly good operating condition, although used only in parades and on similar ceremonial occasions.

Following William Gray, the late Wiley Burroughs Rogerson was elected chief and served the department for over 33 years before retiring on account of ill health. Mike Roberson is the present chief and Charles Gurganus is assistant chief. Others who have headed the firemen in recent years include Arthur Bullock and John Rawls. In 1974 there were 20 men in the department, practically all of whom have had some training in the schools held at intervals in various sections of the state.

The first rescue squad in Martin County was organized in Robersonville in January, 1959, under sponsorship of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, which had an active chapter in the town at that time. John L. House and Robert E. Lee were active in persuading the Jaycees to sponsor the movement, the former serving as dispatcher and the latter as chairman and training officer after the squad was organized. Ambulance and other equipment of the House & Biggs Funeral Home there were made available for use by the unit, which began its service to the people of the section immediately after being organized and has since acquired its own modern equipment and reached a high degree of proficiency.

The first dozen members of the Robersonville Rescue Squad were Dick Matthews, Wilmer P. Matthews, Gene Taylor, Tom James, Wallace R. Bullock, Billy Greene, Ralph Mobley, Russell Oakley, Arthur Bullock, John Rawls, Billy Hurst, and Billy Warren. They gave their services without compensation and held meetings twice each month, local physicians assisting in the training sessions.

Near the close of the year 1974 the squad had 13 members, six of whom had completed training as emergency medical technicians (EMT), with several others expected to qualify for that degree in the immediate future. Captaincy of the squad is rotated yearly among the members, Sam Rawls heading the organization during the latter part of 1974. The squad is on call 24 hours daily, working closely with law enforcement officials, fire departments, hospitals, and physicians in answering emergency calls. The rescue unit has performed an outstanding service to people throughout the western portion of the county by its promptness, competence and overall efficiency in responding to the numerous calls made upon it. Its general effectiveness provided the impetus for organization of similar units in various other towns of the county.

The Robersonville post office was established July 10, 1874, about four and a half years after the town had been incorporated, and Wilson T. Outterbridge was appointed first postmaster. The town had a population of 104 at that time, with a total of about 500 patrons to be served by the new postal facility. Where people of the section received their mail prior to this has not been determined, and neither is it known how the mails were handled, since the Seaboard & Raleigh railroad was not to be completed until 1882, some eight years later. After the trains began operating, mail was received and dispatched three times a week. The first post office was located on the east side of Main Street in the first block north of the railroad.

William T. Outterbridge, 22 years of age at the time of his appointment during the second administration of President U. S. Grant, was recommended for the Robersonville position by Hamilton Postmaster William W. Gardner. A relative of Martin County's pioneer educator, Stephen W. Outterbridge, the young man served as postmaster for nine and a half years before his death on January 7, 1884. He is buried in a plot not more than 50 paces back of one of the oldest landmarks of the town, the Masonic Hall building.

James H. Grimes was the second Robersonville postmaster, assuming duties of the office January 21, 1884, and holding it for a little more than five years before being succeeded by Thomas H. Whichard on April 19, 1889. Whichard was the only man to hold the office on two different occasions, serving the first time for more than four years, from April 19, 1889, until June 17, 1893; then being appointed again September 17, 1900, and continuing until December 27, 1906, for a total tenure of more than 10 years. James Cornelius Crawford was

Robersonville's fourth postmaster, serving by appointment of President Grover Cleveland from June 17, 1893, until August 28, 1897, something over four years. He ran for the office of Martin County sheriff the following year, 1898, moved to Williamston after being elected and continued as sheriff until 1916.

Alexander Wynn, an appointee of President William McKinley, served a little over three years after becoming postmaster on August 28, 1897, being followed by Thomas H. Whichard, who started on his second appointment to the office September 17, 1900. Those succeeding him and dates they began their service, starting with William S. Vick on December 27, 1906, are as follows: Stephen L. Ross, April 23, 1913; Neva S. Ross, February 15, 1920; Orlando P. Roberson, November 16, 1920; Wade E. Vick, son of former postmaster William S. Vick, March 23, 1922; Fountain F. Cox, July 23, 1934; Mrs. Geneva J. Weaver, July 1, 1939; and Lenward E. Thomas, December 30, 1965, to the present.

Prior to the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, which began in 1933, the political patronage system applied to appointments of postmasters, those named usually being members of the party in control of the national administration at the time. Roosevelt sponsored changes in the law to provide for such appointments to be made on a merit basis, following civil service examinations, and postmasters have since been made subject to regulations which forbid political activity or favoritism for reasons of party affiliation. There have been substantially fewer changes in postmasterships since. Mrs. Geneva J. Weaver was the first postmaster to be appointed under the new system in Robersonville, and she remained in the office for upwards of 28 years, longest term of anyone who ever served there. Wade E. Vick had the second longest tenure, 12 years; Thomas E. Whichard served on two different occasions for a total of more than 10 years; and Lenward E. Thomas had been in the office for more than nine years in 1974.

Planned originally as a rural trading center and market for agricultural commodities at a time when cotton was truly king of all southern crops, Robersonville became the first town to have a tobacco market and developed into a leader in the industrial revolution which has characterized the economy of Martin County in recent years. The town had a population of about 50 when it was incorporated in 1870 and 104 when it became a post office four years later. After 10 more years, in 1884, it had a population of about 200, eleven general stores, three steam-powered grist mills, sawmills and cotton gins, as well as two physicians and several ministers.

Writing about the progress made in the first dozen years of its existence, the editor of the Tarboro Southerner had the following article about a trip he made to the town in early August, 1882: "Robersonville has a population of a few hundred. A dozen years ago the site of the town was a pine forest. Since then there has been this change. The houses are all new and painted. It is undoubtedly the prettiest village on the (rail) road. It is named for Col. Henry D. Roberson, one of the most public-spirited and enterprising citizens in the South. In fact, Robersonville is the work of this one man, and it is a fitting monument to him who has fought life's battle and so far has been victorious. There is a flourishing school; the schoolhouse was built by him alone. The pretty little church of the Disciples—free to all, however—was also built by this man. This will be a considerable town, quite a number of people are now trying to buy lots for stores and dwellings. The station between this place and Williamston (Everetts) will be at Mr. S. F. Everett's, J. P., one of the most popular men in the county of Martin. He marries as many couples as all the justices of the peace in the county. His advice is sought by his neighbors. Mr. Everett is building a large store which will be next to the railroad warehouse when it is built."

Robersonville assumed leadership in 1900 for development of a new crop which was beginning to make agricultural history for the entire area by opening the first tobacco auction market in Martin County. Production of tobacco in the county, then in a more or less experimental stage, received its greatest impetus when the market opened for its first sales on August 7, 1900. Support of the market was a community undertaking and continued as such for years, with practically every individual citizen and business firm supporting the movement, enabling the town to successfully compete as a tobacco marketing center with much larger places. At one time, the Robersonville market was reported to be the largest in the world with a single set of buyers.

The market at Williamston was not established until two years later, the two county towns now selling an estimated 35 per cent more tobacco than is produced in the county. Acreage to the crop is rigidly controlled, something over 7,000 acres being allotted to county growers in 1973. Largest acreage on record was in 1930, when 18,284 acres were planted, but average yields have increased steadily over the years, an average of 2,400 pounds per acre having been harvested in the county in 1973, compared with 575 pounds per acre in 1929. Despite its relatively small acreage in recent years, dollar value of the crop now exceeds that of all other field crops combined. Robersonville continues to have an outstanding market, and the section surrounding the town is among the leaders in production and quality.

Industrial development began to claim the attention of Robersonville citizens early in the present century, and a meeting was held January 10, 1910, to discuss the subject. They were anxious for the community to obtain manufacturing enterprises which could provide steady year-around employment for a substantial number of residents. It was decided to build a hosiery mill, and $11,000 in stock for such an undertaking was subscribed at the meeting. Less than a month later, the Robersonville Hosiery & Manufacturing Company was incorporated, and a new building for the firm was completed at the western edge of the town in July, 1910.

Objectives of the plant were described on a grandiose scale, being listed in the charter application "For construction and operation of all kinds of hosiery mills, manufacture of all kinds of knit goods, cotton goods, all kinds of furniture, preparation of all kinds of canned goods; and for the construction, maintenance and operation of all kinds of gas and electric power and lighting plants, to furnish gas or electric lights in private homes, street lights, and to exercise all power and privileges incident to gas and electric light plants." Operations did not prove too successful, and about two years later, in June, 1912, the firm was reorganized as the Robersonville-Tar River Hosiery Mill, Inc., and the capital stock was increased to $25,000. About the same time, a large cotton ginning plant was being completed and there was some talk about a fertilizer plant being built.

Most of the industry in Robersonville through the early part of the present century was centered around the handling and processing of agricultural or forest products. In addition to the lumber and grist mills, which were in production more or less continuously, depending on the availability of raw materials, there were a number of cotton gins and tobacco redrying and stemming plants, which operated only on a seasonal basis. Henry D. Roberson, Wiley Rogerson & Company, and Taylor Mill & Gin Company were some of the larger operations of the earlier days in Robersonville, along with several others. First local tobacco processing firm to be incorporated was Robersonville Tobacco Redrying Company, chartered in February, 1918, with 34 stockholders. It was reorganized and reincorporated about two years later under the same name with the authorized capital stock being increased from $25,000 to $100,000. Similar firms which have operated in Robersonville since then include W. M. Scales Company, Fields Tobacco Company, and Southeastern Tobacco Company.

There were a few early industries not directly related to agriculture, the D. B. Parker Buggy Company, in operation as early as 1903, being one of them. A newspaper report some years later said the firm was shipping buggies in carload lots to dealers in other sections. The firm continued operations well up to around the 1920's before its product was finally supplanted by the automobile. The Carolina Brick Company, which had headquarters in Kinston, was another non-agricultural firm to locate in Robersonville. It had a plant there in 1905 with a daily capacity of 30,000 ornamental brick, but remained in existence for a relatively short time.

The two most recent decades have seen the field of industry broadened considerably in both the town and county, those dealing with textiles and related products leading the way. One not connected with textiles was a poultry processing plant which began operations in Robersonville in 1958 under the firm name of Austin Farms. It had a weekly processing capacity of 400,000 fowls. The entire operation was purchased in July, 1966, by Central Soya of Athens, Inc., a Mid-Western firm, and continues its operations there under the latter name.

The town received a substantial addition to its economy in 1958, when the Robville Manufacturing Company was chartered and began operations there with about 40 employees engaged in the manufacture of children's wearing apparel. It expanded its operations and by 1965 had around 150 employees, most of them women, when it was acquired by Blue Gem Manufacturing Company, which had other plants in the state manufacturing women's and children's clothing. It continues its operations in Robersonville under the new name of Southern Apparel Company, constructing and occupying its own new million-dollar building on East Third Street Extension in the early 1970's.

Within a 13-month period in 1969 and 1970, three firms announced plans for locating in the Robersonville area. They represented three different industrial fields, and all three began operations by or before 1971, two of them constructing their own bulidings of considerable size within two miles of the town's boundaries.

First of the three to announce was Robersonville Products Company, which erected a building of 60,000 square feet about a mile east of Robersonville and went into production in the latter part of 1970. It employed about 50 persons at first in the manufacture of a quality line of display fixtures for retail establishments. Several additions have been made since, the plant being designed for more than 150 employees. Blue Ridge Shoe Company constructed a building of 64,000 square feet about two miles east of the town and began making children's shoes in July, 1970, with 225 employees. Another sewing plant operation, Sandra Manufacturing Company, began operating in the old Chevrolet agency building about the start of 1971, employing 50 to 75, mostly women, in the manufacture of children's undergarments.

All of these manufacturing enterprises have made substantial contributions to the growth and development of the economy of Robersonville and Martin County. Many of them are still in operation, including all which located there in recent years. Without exception, the management of the new undertakings have expressed satisfaction with the reception and cooperation they have received from the people of the community, as well as from officials of the town and county.

EVERETTS

First known as Everetts Cross Roads, the town of Everetts was incorporated in February, 1891, as a direct result of completion of the Albemarle & Raleigh Railroad between Williamston and Tarboro, although it had begun operating as the Seaboard & Raleigh Railroad some eight and a half years previously. The village was located on lands of Simon Peter Everett and was named for him. He had bought 125 acres in that section in 1865 and another 181 acres in 1870, donating sufficient land for a right of way to persuade the railroad to pass through his property. He built a house there in 1870, a two-story structure which still stands back of the store buildings on the east side of Main Street. The post office at Everetts was established in 1884, about two years after the railroad had been completed, and just about seven years before the town was incorporated.

Following is the text of the act of incorporation, Chapter 70, Private Laws of North Carolina, adopted by the General Assembly and ratified February 18, 1891:

"Section 1. That the town of Everetts in Martin County be and the same is hereby incorporated by the name and style of "Everetts," and shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

"Sec. 2. That the limits of said town shall be as follows: Beginning at the first culvert on the Albemarle & Raleigh Railroad, thence running south 440 yards to a stake; thence east and parallel with said railroad 1,760 yards to a stake; thence north 880 yards to a stake, a corner; thence west 1,760 yards parallel with said railroad to a stake; thence south to the beginning.

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor and five commissioners and one constable and such other police officers as the commissioners may provide for by an ordinance for that purpose, and the commissioners shall have power to elect or appoint a secretary and treasurer.

"Sec. 4. That there shall be an election held for the offices mentioned in this act on the first Monday in May, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one (1891), and each succeeding year thereafter, under the same restrictions that county and state elections are held, and all male citizens residing within said corporate limits who have been in the state 12 months and 90 days within the corporate limits previous to the day of election shall be entitled to vote at said election.

"Sec. 5. That until their successors are elected as provided for in this act, the following named persons shall fill said offices: mayor, L. B. Wynn; commissioners, S. F. Everett, W. H. Stewart, Joseph Taylor, J. A. Everett, T. H. Bailey, constable, Amlick James.

"Sec. 6. That this act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

A little more than two years later, March 6, 1893, the first act of incorporation was repealed and a new one adopted, substantially the same except for extending the boundaries somewhat and reducing the number of commissioners from five to three. The following were named to serve until an election could be held on the first Monday in May, 1893, when officers were to be regularly chosen for the ensuing year: S. F. Everett, mayor; L. B. Wynn, W. H. Stewart, and T. H. Bailey, commissioners; and J. E. Rogers, constable.

Names of citizens who have served as officials of the town of Everetts since its establishment are not obtainable in records presently available, except for a few relatively recent years. The first two acts relating to incorporation of the town appointed officials to serve for a few months until elections could be held, but there is no further mention of those who served as mayor and commissioners until 1949, when election returns show the following were elected to serve for the ensuing two years: J. Woolard Peel, mayor; Jesse Keel, George W. Taylor, H. M. Ayers, H. S. Hardy, and J. E. Mobley, commisioners. In 1953 Peel was again mayor; George W. Taylor, H. S. Hardy, M. P. Nobles, M. S. Tarkington, and Floyd Stalls were commissioners.

There is a six-year gap in the record of town officers between 1953 and 1959, when J. Woolard Peel was again elected mayor, along with the following commissioners: George Taylor, Alton Stalls, James Stalls, Haywood Peaks, and William M. Cherry. Mayor Peel, after serving for 12 years, declined renomination in 1961, but was elected by a write-in vote over the convention nominee and served for another two years, commissioners being the same as in 1959 except for George Taylor, who was replaced by Joseph Modlin. George Taylor was elected mayor in 1963, with the following commissioners: Alton Stalls, James Stalls, Vernon Wynn, Hubert Clark, and Joseph Stalls.

Next, H. M. Ayers was elected mayor in both 1967 and 1969; the commissioners in 1967 being M. S. Tarkington, Alton Stalls, Clayton Savage, Alton Keel, and Joseph Modlin; and in 1969 they were Russell Wynn, Bruce Stalls, Clayton Savage, Elton Mobley, and Robert W. Whitaker. H. M. Ayers was elected mayor for the third straight time in 1971 and the commissioners were Vernon Wynn, Robert W. Whitaker, Elton Mobley, Charlie Mack Williams, and Clayton Savage. Everetts adopted the non-partisan plurality election method in 1973, doing away with the conventions and primaries and moving the election date from May to November, when the following were elected: Vernon Wynn, mayor; Alton E. Keel, Clayton Savage, Robert W. Whitaker, and Russell Wynn. Only four persons filed for commissioners, leaving one vacancy on the board after the election. Following the death of Mayor Vernon Wynn during the early part of 1973, M. S. Tarkington was appointed to serve his unexpired term and continued in the office through 1974.

About the time of its incorporation in 1891, the town was developing into a bustling trading and supply center, providing a market for the principal agricultural products of the region, including cotton, peanuts, grapes, and potatoes; and sales outlets for supplies of all kinds, such as fertilizers, farm implements and equipment, feeds, groceries, clothing, dry goods, and like commodities. The railroad was truly the lifeline of the community, providing the principal means of both communication and transportation through its telegraph lines, mail, passenger, express, and freight services.

Population at the time Everetts was incorporated is not known, but the village had 127 people in 1900, increasing steadily to 146 in 1910, 230 in 1920, reaching a peak of 270 in 1930; and then, going into reverse, dropping just as steadily to 265 in 1940, 244 in 1950, 225 in 1960, and 198 in 1970. The declining trend is parallel with the falling influence of the railroad in recent years and in inverse ratio to the mounting influence of the motor vehicle on commerce and industry.

Martin County Lumber Company, Inc., was an early industry of the Everetts section. Principal stockholders were J. C. McNaughton, L. A. Cornwell, George P. McNaughton, and Calvin Maus, all of Philadelphia, Pa. The sawmill installation, commonly known throughout the region as "McNaughton's Mill," was constructed in 1890, just prior to the incorporation of the town, on the north side of the railroad at what is now the western edge of the municipality. In addition to the mill, an office, commissary, two stores, and between 10 and 20 houses were built at the site. George McNaughton's residence was a large two-story structure and probably the first house in the county to have steam heat, furnished by the mill's boilers. This industry was largely responsible for the growth of the town from 1890 until 1909, when the mill shut down for lack of timber in the immediate area. Lumber from this plant was used in construction of the first famous boardwalk at Atlantic City, N. J.

There were a number of other industrial and business operations in Everetts during those early days. Joseph Taylor had a large two-story buggy and wagon manufacturing plant, blacksmith and machine shop, which he operated from the late 1800's until his death in 1898. Later Joe Stalls operated the blacksmith shop and made caskets at the same location. It was last operated by Alton Stalls in 1935. Amlick Rogerson also had a blacksmith shop in operation from the 1800's until around 1908. L. B. Wynne operated a sawmill there prior to 1904, when he installed a steam-powered grist mill and cotton gin; and the Martin County Brick & Tile Company began the manufacture and sale of brick, tile, and clay products in 1907. Bailey, Barnhill & Stroud installed a cotton gin and sawmill around 1910, the gin continuing in operation until about 1950 and the sawmill until 1960.

Frank Teel built the first automobile garage in Everetts between 1912 and 1914, having the agency for several lines, among them the "Baby Grand" Chevrolet. In 1919 V. G. Taylor, J. T. Barnhill, and L. A. Clark erected the two-story Champion Auto Company building on Main Street, where at various times they sold Champion, Star, Durant, Hudson, Essex, and Pan-American brands of cars and did auto repair work. The firm went out of business in 1930. A few years later, in 1937, a shirt factory was opened on the second floor of the Champion Auto Company building; and in 1940 H. L. Barnhill and V. G. Taylor went into a soft-drink bottling business in the town.

Everetts had a bank for about 15 years of its existence, the Planters & Merchants Bank being organized there in 1916. Officers at the time were V. R. Taylor, president; Henry D. Peel, vice president; V. G. Taylor, cashier; and the directors were V. R. Taylor, Henry D. Peel, B. S. Cowin, S. E. Roberson, A. L. Roebuck, R. A. Bailey, J. H. D. Peel, and J. T. Barnhill. On April 2, 1918, the bank was held up by three masked men and robbed of $2,000 in cash and $4,900 in U. S. Government bonds. The hold-up men were cornered in a patch of woods near Everetts and captured a short time later, the money and bonds being recovered. The robbery created a sensation throughout the section and was one of the main topics of conversation for many weeks. It was the first of only two bank hold-ups in the history of the county up to 1974, the other taking place in Williamston during the late 1950's. The Everetts bank continued its successful operation until December 11, 1930, when it was forced to close after runs developed on a number of eastern Carolina banks following the failure of a major banking institution in Greenville.

Two of the first mercantile establishments in Everetts were in operation before the town was established in 1891. Simon Peter Everett started the first one in 1882, about the time the railroad was completed, the building being constructed near the depot. The Bailey brothers, Thomas H. and Joseph E., built another one in 1884, later known as the Norman Burroughs store. In 1896, W. S. Barnhill, Tom James, W. B. and W. H. Clark, L. B. Wynne and others had stores in the town, and some member of the Barnhill family has been in business there continuously from that time through 1974. The Barnhill Supply Company building was the oldest brick store in town in 1974. Others who have conducted business of one kind or another there since 1900 include Sam Clark, J. S. Peel, E. A. Phelps, P. T. Everett, John W. Perkins, Don J. Meeks, John W. Cherry, John A. Everett, Chester Clark, J. S. Ayers, Jesse Keel, G. W. Taylor, G. C. Bailey, and Vernon Wynn. These do not include a number of barber shops, saloons and service establishments operated at different times in the business district since the 1880's.

Mail for the section was handled through at least two other post offices before the one at Everetts was established in 1884. First was "Colly," as it was listed in U. S. Post Office Department records, established November 4, 1881, with James A. Whitley as postmaster. This was evidently located in what is known today as the Collie Swamp section between Everetts and Robersonville. Changes came fast and furious in the ensuing two years. Whitley served only a little more than a month as postmaster before W. H. Wilson took over on December 8, 1881, and remained about four months before he was succeeded by A. W. Downing on April 7, 1882. The office was discontinued a little over a month later, on May 18, 1882.

Next an office named "Wilsonville" was established August 23, 1882, William H. Wilson being named postmaster, the same man who had held the office at "Colly" a few months before. He held the office for about a year and a half, being succeeded by Thomas H. Bailey on January 2, 1884, about a month before the name was again changed, this time to "Everetts," on February 25, 1884.

The final change brought stability to the office, Bailey continuing as the first postmaster at Everetts for more than five years, being succeeded by Thomas James on April 19, 1889. Thomas James then served for over seven years, being followed by Edward James on June 9, 1896, and he was in office a little over a year before he was succeeded by Hyman D. Cowan on October 29, 1897. Cowan was said to be the first and only Republican to hold the office during its early history. He did not particularly want the position and had the office moved to the store of Peel & Clark, with James S. Peel handling most of the work.

Cowan continued to hold the title for nearly seven years, James S. Peel receiving the formal appointment and becoming postmaster on September 11, 1906. He then began a record that has been surpassed by few in the annals of the U. S. Postal Service. In addition to handling the work for a number of years before being formally appointed, he was postmaster for more than 30 years, until his death on September 18, 1936. The following day, September 19, 1936, his son, Dillon C. Peel, became acting postmaster, receiving the permanent appointment a few months later and serving for nearly 36 years until his retirement on June 23, 1972. The father-and-son record of continuous service as postmaster at Everetts covers a period of approximately 66 years. Joseph Gurganus of Williamston served for over a year as acting postmaster following Peel's retirement, with Ben A. Jones, Jr., receiving the appointment in 1973 and continuing through 1974. Jones is believed to be the first black to hold the office of postmaster in any Martin County town since post-Civil War days.

OAK CITY

Martin County has one town that was named for a Raleigh laundry which was in operation around the turn of the century. The town is Oak City, presently fourth largest in the county, which has had three names over its relatively brief history of 80-odd years. A citizen of the village, then called "Conoho," which had a population of possibly 200, saw "Oak City Laundry" on delivery wagons while on a visit to the state's capital city early in this century, liked the sound of the name, and was influential enough to have an act adopted by the legislature in 1905 changing the name of his home town to "Oak City."

The present Oak City was first known as "Goose Nest," as it was located in a township by the same name in the northwestern part of the county. However, it was first incorporated in 1891 as "Conoho," because it was near the headquarters of a creek by that name, believed first so-called by Indians. It may be said that the town is one which is literally "on the square," since metes and bounds set out in acts of incorporation designate a central point and provide for its boundaries to be exactly square by compass from there. Text of the original act of incorporation, Chapter 100, Private Laws of 1891, ratified February 21, 1891, follows:

"An Act to Change the Name of and Incorporate the Town of Conoho, Formerly known as Goose Nest, in Martin County.

"The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact:

"Section 1. That the name of the town of 'Goose Nest,' in Martin County, be and the same is hereby changed to 'Conoho' and incorporated by the name and style of 'The Town of Conoho,' and it shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town shall be as follows: Eight hundred and eighty yards east, west, north and south from the center of a street between Hyman's, Taylor's, and Jeffrey's stores, and shall run with the cardinal points of the compass.

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor, three commissioners, and a constable, and the commissioners shall have power to appoint a secretary and treasurer.

"Sec. 4. There shall be an election of officers mentioned in this act on the first Monday in May, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, and every year therafter under the same restrictions that county and state elections are held. All male citizens over twenty-one years of age who have resided in the state twelve months and ninety days within said corporation previous to the day of election shall be entitled to vote at said election.

"Sec. 5. That said commissioners shall have powers to pass by-laws, rules and regulations for the good government of the town, not inconsistent with the laws of the state and the United States, and to impose fines and penalties for the violation of town ordinances and collect the same.

"Sec. 6. That all fines collected for violation of town ordinances shall go into the town treasury for the benefit of the town.

"Sec. 7. That until their successors are elected on the first Monday in May, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, the following persons shall fill said offices: Mayor, Z. M. Whitehurst; commissioners: W. B. Ross, R. T. Edmondson, and Samuel Hinson; and constable, Lawrence Howard.

"Sec. 8. This act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

The act changing the name of the town from Conoho to Oak City and providing new boundaries was ratified in the General Assembly on

February 23, 1905. It reads as follows:

"An Act to Amend Chapter 100, Private Acts of 1891, in Reference to the Town of Conoho.

"The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact:

"Section 1. That section one of chapter one hundred, Private Acts of one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, be and the same is hereby amended by striking out in line two thereof the word 'Conoho' and inserting in lieu thereof the words 'Oak City.' And by striking out in line three thereof the words 'the town of Conoho' and inserting in lieu thereof the words 'Oak City.'

"Sec. 2. That all of section two of said chapter after the word 'follows' in line one of said section be and the same is hereby stricken out and the following inserted in lieu thereof: 'The said town shall be one mile square, with the central point in the center of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, opposite the middle of the railroad depot now in use; said point to be the central point, with four outside boundary lines, the two outside boundary lines on the northeast and southwest sides of the said Atlantic Coast Line Railroad to run parallel with said railroad and the two outside boundary lines on the northwest and southeast side of said town to run at right angles with said railroad, forming altogether a perfect square; the center of each of the four above-named lines to be by measurement one-half mile from the center point. All streets and alleys south of the line of the old county road or street now running by the dwellings of H. K. Harrell and Z. M. Whitehurst and said line extended shall be, when laid out, parallel with said railroad and at right angles to the same, and the streets and alleys on the north side of said old county road or street, or the lines of the same extended, when laid out, to be parallel and at right angles to said old county road or street or the extension of the line thereof.'

"Sec. 3. All acts or clauses of acts in conflict with this act are hereby repealed."

The village that was to become Oak City began gaining prominence in 1890 when it became the principal rail shipping point and trading center for the upper part of the county following completion of a branch line of a railroad running from that section through Parmele to Greenville and Kinston. This branch, eventually extended northward to Weldon, was to become a part of the Atlantic Coast Line system in 1900. Population at the time "Conoho" was incorporated in 1891 is not known, but it was officially recorded as 115 in the 1900 census; and, after being renamed Oak City in 1905, it was destined to grow steadily to a peak of 574 in 1960, dropping back slightly to 559 in 1970. Starting with 115 in 1900, population of the town as reported in decennial censuses thereafter was as follows: 251 in 1910; 397 in 1920; 481 in 1930; 512 in 1940; 518 in 1950; 574 in 1960; and 559 in 1970.

As in all other towns of Martin County, the record of those who served as officials during the early days is far from complete. Z. M. Whitehurst was the first mayor; Lawrence Howard was the first constable or police chief; and W. B. Ross, R. T. Edmondson, and Samuel Hinson comprised the first board of commissioners. All of them were appointed in the act of incorporation to serve until the initial election could be held on the first Monday in May, 1891; but there is no record of who was elected then and few notes for many years thereafter as to who succeeded them. There is a newspaper report of the following being elected in 1901: C. F. Gardner, mayor; Ben Casper, constable; James L. Davenport, W. A. Casper, and J. L. Hines, commissioners. With the exception of this single item, there is no record of any other early officers until 1945.

The following officers were elected in 1945: J. N. Hopkins, mayor; E. N. Harrell, J. C. Johnson, Wheeler Daniel, J. C. Ross, and J. A. Ayers, commissioners. In 1949 J. C. Johnson was elected mayor, along with the following commissioners: E. N. Harrell, J. E. Copeland, K. S. Bunting, J. H. Hopkins, and M. C. Liverman. The next report is on the 1951 election, the following being chosen: Ernest Bunting, mayor; M. C. Liverman, W. W. Tyson, H. W. High, J. H. Hopkins, and H. M. Ainsley, commissioners. J. H. Ayers was elected mayor in 1952, but only three commissioners were chosen, Minton Beach, Edmond Early, Jr., and H. M. Ainsley.

Prior to 1953, Oak City elections were held annually, but a special act of the 1953 legislature made the elections a biennial affair, all officers being chosen for two-year terms. Records are complete from that point, the following being elected then and in subsequent years as mayor and members of the boards of commissioners:

1953: J. H. Ayers, mayor; Minton Beach, Jr., H. M. Ainsley, W. E. Early, F. B. Worsley, E. N. Harrell, commissioners; 1955: L. H. Ayers, mayor; J. C. Johnson, H. M. Ainsley, N. W. Johnson, F. B. Worsley, Hurtford Smith; 1957: J. H. Ayers, mayor; J. C. Johnson, N. W. Johnson, Hurtford Smith, F. B. Worsley, Minton Beach, Jr. 1959: J. C. Johnson, mayor; Minton Beach, Wiley Bunting, N. W. Johnson, F. B. Worsley, Hurtford Smith, commissioners; 1961: J. C. Johnson, mayor; Murray Manning, Wiley Bunting, N. W. Johnson, F. B. Worsley, Hurtford Smith, commissioners; 1963: J. C. Johnson, mayor; Murray Manning, Wiley Bunting, N. W. Johnson, Minton Beach, Jr., Hurtford Smith, commissioners; 1965: J. C. Johnson, mayor; William L. Butler, Wiley Bunting, N. W. Johnson, Minton Beach, Jr., F. B.

Worsley; 1967: Exactly same as 1965, all officials reelected; 1969: J. C. Johnson, mayor; Francis Keel, Wiley Bunting, E. N. Harrell, Jr., Minton Beach, Jr., Hurtford Smith; 1971: Exactly same as 1969, all officials reelected; 1973: J. C. Johnson, mayor; Otis W. Casper, Wiley Bunting, R. S. Edmondson, Jr., Billy O. Hampton, Spencer L. Harrell, commissioners.

J. C. Johnson, 1974 mayor of Oak City, held that office longer than any other person in the history of the town, serving continuously since 1959, and at least one term as mayor prior to that time, having been elected in 1949. He also served as member of the board of commissioners for at least two terms in the 1950's. Wiley Bunting, a member of the 1974 board of commissioners, served continuously in that office since 1959. Others with lengthy periods of service as mayor and commissioners in more recent years include Minton Beach, N. W. Johnson, Francis B. Worsley, Hurtford Smith, J. H. Hopkins, E. N. Harrell, J. H. Ayers, and others.

Electricity was first made available to people in Oak City in the latter part of the 1920's, when that town and Hamilton joined together in constructing a transmission line to connect with the system in Hobgood, which received its power at that time from the municipal plant in Tarboro. Oak City still owns its distribution system, purchasing current wholesale from an REA-affiliate—Edgecombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation—and retailing it to people of the town.

First steps for installation of a municipal water plant in Oak City were taken in June, 1955, when citizens of the town, by a vote of 82 to 5, approved issuance of $70,000 in bonds to pay for the project. Work began shortly thereafter, and the first connections to the completed system were made to residences of Major Earl Council and D. E. Bunting the week of February 19, 1956, with 125 meters installed during the first two weeks and others following rapidly. In additon to the 75,000-gallon elevated tank, the system included a deep well, pump house and pump with a guaranteed flow of 250 gallons per minute, approximately four miles of water mains and pipe, eight fire hydrants, and a chlorinator. The town was third in the county to install a modern municipal water system, total cost of which was $91,268, financed by the bond issue, money on hand, and a slight increase in the tax rate.

Organized in 1955, about the time the town began installation of its municipal water system, the Oak City Volunteer Fire Department has performed an outstanding service for the section in succeeding years. The original organization had 20 members, including the chief, W. W. Tyson, and assistant chief, F. B. Worsley. The first piece of motorized equipment, a pumper and hose wagon with a 500-gallon auxiliary tank, was purchased and delivered a short time later. Since then another pumper and a 1,500-gallon tanker truck have been added, the latter designed for use in rural areas where water lines are not available.

During the mid-sixties a rescue squad was organized and an ambulance obtained, six members completing the special course to qualify for first-aid and rescue work. Members of the fire department and rescue squad work very closely together, serving in either capacity in cases of emergency. M. O. Crisp is the present chief of the fire department, which has 43 members, including those of the rural unit.

All the fire-fighting and rescue equipment is kept at the town hall or municipal building, which was constructed in 1962. Police headquarters and the office of the town clerk are also located in this building. In 1974, Leroy Mobley had been chief of police of Oak City since November 11, 1971, and Mrs. Laurie Joyner had been town clerk for more than seven years.

Records of the Postal Service show that the first post office in what is now the Oak City section was established as "Goose Nest" on March 5, 1888, with appintment of John T. Hyman as postmaster. Name of the office was changed to "Conoho" June 1, 1891, shortly after the town was incorporated on February 21, 1891, John T. Hyman continuing as postmaster until May 1, 1897, when he was succeeded by John L. Hines. The name was again changed, this time to "Oak City," on August 9, 1904, although the town itself was not incorporated under that name until six months later, February 23, 1905, Hines continuing to hold the post office until he was succeeded by Flavious M. Harrell on January 10, 1906.

Sallie M. Johnson was next appointed postmaster at Oak City on April 29, 1914, and held the office for more than 30 years until her retirement on August 31, 1944. James M. Rawls served from Sepember 1, 1944, until his death October 6, 1950. His widow, Mrs. Pauline J. Rawls, succeeded him and retained the office for a little more than a year, being succeeded by Rupert J. Rawls on November 30, 1951. He continued as postmaster for nearly 22 years, retiring June 8, 1973. His successor, Thomas M. Pearson, assumed the duties the following day, June 9, 1973, and has since held the office.

Oak City is located in the center of that portion of Martin County which was settled largely for its agricultural possibilities and was surrounded by large plantations throughout most of the early history of the section. The town was established primarily as a trading center, marketing and shipping point for farm commodities and, with the exception of some sawmills, cotton gins, grist and feed mills—few of which are in operation today—has had little connection with industrial development of the county. Eastern Farm Products, Inc., a sizable fertilizer bulk blending and mixing plant, was the single industrial plant of any consequence in that section in the latter part of 1974.

PARMELE

The town of Parmele owes its establishment to several circumstances, principally for being selected as the junction point for two railroad lines which have since become a part of the Seaboard Coast Line system. Just prior to 1890, work was started on a branch line that eventually extended from Weldon to Greenville and Kinston, and it had to cross the old Albemarle and Raleigh Railroad tracks in the vicinity of what is now Parmele, then just a very swampy area and not given much consideration as a likely location for a town.

It was first proposed to make Robersonville the junction point, but landowners in that section placed what railroad officials considered to be an exhorbitant price on their land. Next it was decided to go by way of Bethel, but again the railroad was not willing to pay the prices demanded for rights of way in that vicinity. Decision was then made for the tracks to cross at Parmele, that name being chosen as the result of the Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company locating there about the time the branch line to Greenville was completed in 1890. Two years later, another branch line was extended to Washington from Parmele, and the latter became a booming little railroad junction city during the 1890's, at one time having as many as 11 passenger and numerous freight trains passing through daily.

The town itself was incorporated by an act of the General Assembly ratified February 14, 1893, reading as follows:

"An Act to Incorporate the Town of Parmele, in the County of Martin.

"The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact:

"Section 1. That the town of Parmele in Martin County be and is hereby incorporated by the name and style of the Town of Parmele, and it shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town shall be as follows: Beginning at a half-mile post on the Albemarle and Raleigh Railroad, the railroad yard-limits; running north seven east 880 yards to a stake; thence north 83 west 1,760 yards to a stake; thence south seven west

1,760 yards to a stake; thence south 83 east 1,760 yards to a stake; thence north seven east 880 yards to the half-mile post, the beginning, on the Albemarle and Raleigh Railroad.

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor and three commissioners and a constable; and the commissioners shall have power to appoint a secretary and treasurer.

"Sec. 4. There shall be an election of officers mentioned in this act on the first Monday in May, 1893, and every year thereafter, under the same restrictions that county and state elections are held; all male citizens, over 21 years of age who have resided in the state for 12 months, and 90 days within the said corporation, previous to the day of election, shall be entitled to vote at said election.

"Sec. 5. That said commissioners shall have power to pass by-laws rules and regulations for the good government of the town not inconsistent with the laws of the state and the United States, and to impose fines and penalties for the violation of the town ordinances and collect the same.

"Sec. 6. That all fines collected for violation of town ordinances shall go into the town treasury for the benefit of the town.

"Sec. 7. That until their successors are elected on the first Monday in May, 1893, the following persons shall fill said offices: Mayor, William Powell; commissioners: R. F. Gaines, David S. Powell and G. J. Cherry; and for constable, W. H. Harper.

"That this act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

Although there are hardly any early records of the town to be found at the present time, it is known that several officials appointed in the act of incorporation to serve until an election was held the following May continued in office for a number of years afterwards. The first mayor, William Powell, was still in that office in 1902, nine years afterwards, and he continued to serve in that capacity until 1906, covering a span of 13 years. David S. Powell, one of the first three commissioners, was still on the board in 1902 and served until 1905, when he was appointed chief of police and tax collector, holding that office continuously until 1914, giving him a continuous record of service in the two offices of 21 years. It is not known if the other two original commissioners, R. F. Gaines and G. J. Cherry, and the first constable, W. H. Harper, served after their first appointment. Cherry was resident manager of the town's principal industry, Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company, which was owned by a New York corporation and ceased operations in Parmele early in the present century.

There is a gap in available records from 1906 until 1910, but in the latter year, A. L. Bellflower held the office of mayor and was reelected each year from that time until 1916, when there is another break in the records. Bellflower was listed as operating a grocery store in Parmele in 1902 and 1903, but his occupation is not listed during the time he served as mayor. Coming up to 1953, when all officials were elected for two-year terms, John L. Roberson was mayor at that time and was reelected in 1955. There is no record of the 1957 election, but Earl Fleming was elected mayor in 1959 and was succeeded in 1961 by H. A. Gray, who was then reelected in 1963. Single two-year terms were next served by the following: Dallas Matthews, starting in 1965; Carey Bryant, Jr., starting in 1967; Edward Whitehurst, starting in 1969; and Earl Coward, starting in 1971.

Time of election was changed in 1973 from May to November in odd-numbered years, officials starting their terms at the first meeting in the following January. James Pitt, in November, 1973, became the first colored man to be elected mayor of a Martin County town in recent history and took office in January, 1974, after serving for more than eight years as a member of the board of commissioners. He had also been the first colored man elected to a county town's governing board in modern times when he started his initial term in 1965. Pitt had worked for the town in a part-time capacity for 26 years before he became a candidate for commissioner in 1965. The present mayor and commissioners are proud of their record, stating that the town's financial condition is good, with no outstanding debt, many of its streets have been surfaced and municipal affairs are operating very smoothly. In 1971 the municipality erected a small masonry building, renting one-half to the federal government for the Parmele post office, the other half serving as a town hall. It was built at a total cost of $2,785, all of which has been paid, the present mayor doing most of the construction work himself.

There are few records as to membership on the board of commissioners during the early part of the town's history. In 1902 the board was composed of Dr. L. R. Ricks, "company doctor" for the Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company, H. Mayo, and David S. Powell. The following year J. R. Ellison, railroad agent, succeeded Dr. Ricks on the board, H. Mayo and D. S. Powell continuing as the other two members; and the same three were reelected in 1904. Only two commissioners, B. D. Tew and W. W. Harper, were elected in 1905, no reason being assigned for the reduced number. In 1906, a completely new board went into office, composed of I. H. Whichard R. L. Whitley, and A. L. Bellflower. Bellflower later served as mayor for about 10 years. The next listing of commissioners to be found was for the year 1916, when J. T. Stokes, J. L. Williams, and N. O. VanNortwick were elected.

From 1916 until the early 1950's there is a complete blank as to membership on the board of town commissioners, although it was during this period that the town had its greatest population growth, reaching a high of 417 in 1940. Earl R. Bunting, W. B. Cargile, and George C. James were elected commissioners in 1953 and 1955, James also serving as clerk. Ed Whitehurst, J. R. Sutton, and T. T. Adams were elected in 1959. Ed Whitehurst was reelected in 1961, Guy Rawls starting the first of three terms that year and J. T. Laughinghouse being the third member. The board elected in 1963 was composed of Carey Bryant, Jr., Guy Rawls, and Dallas Matthews; and in 1965 it was made up of Carey Bryant, Jr., Guy Rawls, and James Pitt. Starting with 1967, the same three board members—H. W. Ford, Dallas Matthews, and James Pitt—served for six straight years, being reelected in 1969 and 1971. The 1974 board, composed of Carey Bryant, Jr., Ernest Worsley, and Joe Coppage, was elected in 1973 and took office in January, 1974.

The office of constable established in the act of incorporation has had several different designations and has been filled both by appointment and election in the intervening years. It was sometimes called constable, at other times chief of police or policeman. The duties of tax collector were also assigned to the office in most of the years. W. H. Harper received the appointment in the original act, but it is not known how long he served. Following him, the next available record shows J. M. Sykes held the office in 1902, being succeeded by M. G. Whitehurst in 1903 and 1904. David S. Powell was appointed chief of police and tax collector in 1905 and served at least through 1913, then returned in 1916 and served at least one or more additional terms. Clyde Carson held the office in 1914 and L. L. Roberson was elected or appointed in 1915, when the title was again referred to as constable.

Coming up to the early fifties, Tom Adams was police chief in 1953; Guy Rawls in 1955 and 1957; T. T. Adams returning for three straight two-year terms starting in 1961. Irving Carr was elected constable in 1967, and Leamon Roebuck succeeded to the office in 1969. Joe Beach was the last man to fill the position, the office being vacant during 1974, although it was said the commissioners were expected to make an appointment around the latter part of December or early January, 1975.

Population at the time Parmele was incorporated in 1893 is believed to have been possibly a little less than 300, and it has remained slightly above that figure over most of the years that followed, decennial census reports giving it a low of 272 in 1910 and a high of 417 in 1940. The actual census count over the years shows the population to have been as follows: 336 in 1900, 272 in 1910, 355 in 1920, 341 in 1930, 417 in 1940, 406 in 1950, 323 in 1960, and 373 in 1970.

Records of the United States Postal Service show that the post office was established at Parmele on March 3, 1891, about two years before the town was incorporated. David S. Powell was the first postmaster, holding the office for something over six years before being succeeded by William Powell on May 1, 1897. Both men were active in having the town incorporated and served as officials for a number of years. D. S. Powell was postmaster for about four years, Mack G. Whitehurst assuming the duties November 25, 1901, and continuing for nearly five years before being replaced by Robert L. Whitley on September 7, 1906.

Whitley was postmaster for nearly 13 years until he was succeeded by Mrs. Malena Ward Trainham May 12, 1919. She held the office not quite 16 years, but during that time her name was changed to Mrs. Malena W. Powell following her second marriage, the name change becoming effective on the records January 19, 1929. Nicholas Roberson was appointed February 20, 1935, and was postmaster for over 14 years, his resignation becoming effective May 4, 1949. Mrs. Blanche E. Roberson then succeeded to the position as acting postmaster May 4, 1949, received the permanent appointment about a year later, April 17, 1950, and held the office longer than any other person, retiring July 31, 1970, after more than 21 years of service. Mrs. Earl Fleming was appointed at that time and has been postmaster since.

For a good many years, there was a rural route out of the Parmele office, George James—father of the present postmaster—and his brother serving as carriers. The route was later consolidated with one out of the office at Robersonville, after good roads and improvement to motor vehicles made it practical for each carrier to serve a much larger territory than formerly. It is not known exactly when the Parmele route was discontinued, but it was probably somewhere around the early 1920's.

The Parmele area began its big boom in the 1890's, following completion of the north-south branch of the railroad that was to eventually extend from Weldon to Kinston and construction of the plant of the Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company. The new branch line tracks crossed those of the old east-west Albemarle & Raleigh Railroad at that point; and two years later, in 1892, another branch line was completed from Parmele to Washington, making the new town one of the busiest rail junctions in eastern North Carolina at that time. Most of the lumber plant's stockholders were said to live in New York, and the first part of the firm's name was adopted as the name for the town.

Another sawmill was established in the town in 1895, incorporated in North Carolina as the North State Lumber Company, but believed to have been largely financed by the same interests as the Parmele-Eccleston corporation. It is known that the two plants worked very closely together, the first dealing in rough lumber, while the second was largely a planing-mill operation, handling dressed lumber. Gesbourne J. Cherry, a native of Washington County, managed the Parmele-Eccleston plant. He and Oscar J. Flash of New York and Frederick W. Samuels of Martin County were listed as the principal stockholders of the North State Lumber Company when it was chartered September 18, 1895. Both mills ceased operations at Parmele between 1900 and 1910, exact date not determined, and Cherry moved to Georgetown, S.C., where he is said to have amassed great wealth in later years.

In addition to their milling operations, the two lumber plants also carried on a substantial mercantile business through one or more commissaries located in Parmele. Yearbooks of that period list two such undertakings there prior to 1900, one under the name of Parmele-Eccleston Commissary and another under the name of Parmele Commissary Company. One of them is reported to have had a stock of goods at one time which was valued at $30,000, making it one of the largest such businesses in the county. The plant also is reported to have had its own "company doctor," two men serving in that position at different periods of time.

Branson's North Carolina Yearbook for 1896 lists no less than 10 general mercantile stores in Parmele. They were as follows: A. L. Bellflower, Andrews & Purvis, J. C. Andrews, W. H. Harper, Gaynor & Peele, W. M. Jones & Company, Parmele Commissary Company, D. S. Powell & Company, W. M. Powell, and Purvis, Bryant & Company. Other firms listed at the same time include Thomas Whitley, confectionary, Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company, North State Lumber Company.

Listed in yearbooks as hotels or boarding houses in 1902 and 1903 were the Powell House and Johnson House, believed to have catered mostly to railroad employees required to lay over there between runs. J. T. Stokes, who ran a well-known lunchroom near the railroad station in Parmele for years, was also listed as a hotel keeper around 1915 and 1916. His cafe was famous for dried apple turnovers, widely known as "apple jacks." He moved to Bethel after closing his business in Parmele during the late 1920's and operated a restaurant there for some time.

Other individuals and firms which were engaged in business in Parmele after the turn of the century included Cherry & Company, G. H. Harrison, O. W. Staton, Thomas Whitley, J. T. Stokes & Company, W. C. Andrews, Gray & Wynne, R. L. Whitley, J. H. Bryan & Company, J. C. James, N. O. VanNortwick, and J. C. Wynne. J. C. James operated a store and grist mill there in 1914, and VanNortwick also operated a cotton gin. J. C. Wynne later obtained the Chevrolet dealership and eventually moved it to Bethel. There was only one store in Parmele in 1974, that of Earl Coward, although the population is still about as large or larger than it was in the 1890's, when the peak in number of business establishments was reached. Parmele had a bank for a number of years around the late teens and early twenties, but the decline in prices of farm products and value of farm and timberland following World War I proved too great and it went the way of many such institutions in smaller towns at that time.

The first electric lights in Martin County were said to have been installed in Parmele around the turn of the century, generating equipment in one of the lumber plants being utilized to provide current for lighting some of the homes of plant officials. A proposed contract for the Virginia Electric & Power Company to furnish electric current for the entire community was approved at a special election on March 5, 1935, by a vote of 22 to 5. The company announced plans to completely rebuild the distribution system at that time and put rates into effect which would result in a saving of 35 per cent over previous electric bills.

Parmele also provided another "first" for Martin County back around 1914, when the first brick school building was put into use there as the new home of the Parmele Training School. The name had been changed the year before from Parmele Industrial Institute, a private institution founded in 1912 by W. C. Chance to provide high school education for colored youth of the section. After operating two years as a private school, it came under supervision of the county board of education by an agreement providing for tax funds to be used for supplementing the cost of operation, and the new brick building was erected in 1914. More than $8,000 was obtained through Phelps-Stokes and Rosenwald funds, and the county provided $15,000 to complete work on the building. For a number of years Parmele Training School was the only one providing high-school education for black youth in the upper part of the county. It was consolidated with East

End High School at Robersonville and moved into its new building there in 1955.

The passage of time was not very kind to the commercial life of Parmele. The sawmills cut out most of the merchantable timber and ceased operations during the early part of the century. Development of the motor vehicle dealt a death blow to railroad passenger traffic, and trucks took over much of the freight transportation. A new highway route was established and paved, by-passing the business section of the town. The number of business establishments declined from upward of a dozen in former years to a single grocery and general store, operated by a former mayor, Earl Coward, in 1974, plus a service station located on the highway. As a crowning blow, the railroad station—through which thousands of passengers passed and repassed during the hey-day of the "Iron Horse"—was torn down piece by piece in the spring of 1974. Truly, progress by-passed Parmele in its latter days.

GOLD POINT

Gold Point is not only one of the smallest but also one of the most unusual towns in Martin County. For one thing, although it has been incorporated twice during its relatively brief history, it is no longer officially a town, having lost its charter in 1971 due to failure to comply with certain requirements for holding regular meetings and elections over a period of years. For another thing, Gold Point is one of only two towns in the county not located on a waterway or railroad, leaving it entirely dependent on public highways for transportation.

A cross-roads village of about 100 people, Gold Point was known as "Longtown" for a number of years prior to its incorporation in February, 1899. Just how it came by either name has not been established. The name could have originally honored someone named "Long," or it may have been called that because it extended for some distance along the public road. A post office was established there in 1894, designated "Gold Point" since there was another "Longtown" in the state at that time; and, when the town was incorporated, the name of the post office was used to avoid confusing it with the other town. No explanation has been found for selection of the name "Gold Point."

Although "Gold Point" appears as two words in practically all records and papers, the original act of incorporation had it one word, "Goldpoint." Text of the act, including boundaries and appointment of the first officers, Chapter 154, Private Laws of North Carolina, ratified February 28, 1899, is as follows:

"An act to Incorporate the Town of 'Goldpoint' in Martin County.

"Section 1. That the town of Goldpoint, in the county of Martin, be and is hereby incorporated under the style and name of the town of 'Goldpoint,' and as such shall be governed by and subject to the provisions of chapter sixty-two of the Code of North Carolina.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town shall be as follows: 'Beginning at clay hole, near the residence of H. S. Williams, on county road leading from Robersonville to Goldpoint and running westward about three hundred (300) yards to a lightwood stake in John E. Roberson's field; thence northerly so as to strike county road at the colored church, and along said road whole distance about eight hundred (800) yards to a stake on said county road; thence eastward across B. H. Roberson's field a straight line to a stake in the field known as Daniel place; thence southward a straight line about six hundred (600) yards to a stake; thence westward about three hundred (300) yards to the beginning.'

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor, constable and three commissioners, and the following-named persons shall fill said officers until the first Monday in May, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine (1899), or until their successors are elected and qualified as directed by law: G. A. Crofton, mayor; J. A. Bryan, constable; and J. H. Roberson, R. T. Taylor, and B. H. Roberson, commissioners.

"Sec. 4. That the said officers shall be governed in their powers and duties by chapter sixty-six of the code of North Carolina.

"Sec. 5. This act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

There are some scattered references as to who comprised the governing officials of the town after its incorporation, but no complete records. In 1902 and 1903, L. H. Briley was mayor; B. H. Roberson, G. A. Crofton, and R. T. Taylor were commissioners; J. E. Roberson was treasurer; and J. H. Everett was tax collector, a position he held for a number of years thereafter. L. A. Briley was again mayor in 1904; G. A. Crofton, J. A. Bryan, and J. H. Roberson were commissioners, the last named also serving as clerk. J. J. Weaver was mayor in 1906 and 1907; B. H. Roberson, R. T. Taylor, and J. L. Croom were commissioners, Croom also serving as clerk. J. L. Croom became mayor in 1910, serving also in 1911, but there is no record as to the commissioners in those years. J. J. Weaver returned for one year as mayor in 1912, with J. L. Croom holding the office again in 1914, 1916, and for a number of years thereafter. A. C. Smith, J. R. Bryant, and J. J. Weaver were commissioners in 1916.

After 1916, a newspaper report in May, 1935, is the only record of an election being held in Gold Point, although in June, 1957, when action was being taken to reincoporate the town, the late John L. Croom said elections were held fairly regularly until 1939. He evidently was mayor much of the time, as he said the reason for having the town incorporated again was that he had gotten tired of begging people to vote and that no elections had been held since 1939. The newspaper report in May, 1935, said J. L. Croom was elected mayor, along with the following commissioners: Allen Vanderford, John Williams, and T. L. Johnson.

When the town was reincoporated in June, 1957, new officers were appointed in the act to serve until the next election in May, 1959. They were: L. A. Croom, mayor; James L. Croom, Jim Brown, and William Etheridge, commissioners. Elections were supposed to have been held biennially after that; but L. A. Croom said in November, 1974, that he was not working in Gold Point in 1959, when he was appointed mayor and that no commissioners' meetings or elections have been held since. He was notified in 1971 by state authorities that the town's charter had been revoked. In 1974 there was some discussion about having the town incorporated again, and a number of people in the community are said to favor the proposal.

At the time the town was first incorporated in 1899, population was estimated at about 100, the official census a year later in 1900 recorded it as 120. Growth of Gold Point has fluctuated since, reaching a high of 142 in 1940 and a low of 98 in 1960. Decennial census reports of the population over the years are as follows: 120 in 1900, 126 in 1910, 130 in 1920, 121 in 1930, 142 in 1940, 132 in 1950, 98 in 1960, and 108 in 1970. Boundaries of the town have remained about the same over the years. When it was reincorporated the second time, in 1957, there was said to be little variation from the original limits, which enclosed an area of just about one-half mile square.

The post office at Gold Point was established about five years before the town was incorporated. Records of the U. S. Postal Service show the office was established with appointment of Rufus T. Taylor as postmaster on February 10, 1894. He was the only postmaster the town ever had, serving more than 12 years before the office was discontinued September 15, 1906. Since that time mail for the section has been handled through the office at Robersonville. In 1903, when it was first proposed to discontinue the office at Gold Point, people of the town indignantly rejected the idea, declaring they would not patronize a rural free delivery route if one was established.

The town got its start as a community trading center with a number of general stores, a distillery, several barrooms or saloons, a buggy factory, and later adding a sawmill and cotton gin as the principal commercial undertakings in those early days. Rufus T. Taylor established and operated the Gold Point Buggy Company there around the turn of the century, also serving as postmaster and as a town official at various times. John L. Croom obtained an interest in the buggy factory around 1903, his son and other members of the Croom family joining him later to continue the plant's operations as a blacksmith and machine shop well up into the middle of the present century after the manufacture of buggies became no longer profitable. John L. Croom and his son, L. A. Croom, between them held the office of mayor for most of the years since the town's incorporation.

Other firms and individuals who operated businesses of various kinds in Gold Point around the turn of the present century included H. H. Roberson & Son, sawmill; T. L. Johnson & Company, cotton gin; and the following general merchants: Coburn & Roberson, B. L. James & Company, J. E. Roberson & Son, J. H. Roberson, Sr., Crofton & Company, J. B. Coburn, Taylor & Pippin, B. H. Roberson & Son, J. J. Weaver, John L. Williams, A. C. Smith, and others.

One of the older citizens of Gold Point, now retired, speaking in 1974 about the early days, said the town had quite a reputation as a leading legal whiskey manufacturing and sales center before anyone ever thought of prohibition. He remembered seeing the distillery equipment, stating that a tax stamp of $1.10 was required on each gallon of whiskey manufactured. Competition became so keen between the two barrooms then in operation that whiskey—supposed to be taxed at $1.10 per gallon—was sold at retail over the counter for $1 a gallon. After the distillery ceased operating, spirits were shipped by rail, the senior citizen stating that his father had said he had seen as many as 100 barrels of whiskey on the depot platform at Robersonville consigned to the Gold Point whiskey dealers.

HASSELL

Hassell is the second youngest and one of only two Martin County towns to have been established in the 20th century. It was incorporated February 17, 1903, about six years before Bear Grass received its charter in February, 1909, and it followed the establishment of Gold Point as a town in February, 1899, by some four years. Named in honor of Elder Sylvester Hassell, noted Primitive Baptist churchman, historian, author, editor, and educator of the late

19th and early 20th centuries, the town is located in the northwestern part of the county approximately half way between Oak City and Parmele on what is known as the Scotland Neck-Kinston branch of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company.

Surrounded on all sides by a rich agricultural section, Hassell was established as a farm trading and marketing center and shipping point for a number of years before it was incorporated. There were also some sizable timber operations in the region during the past century, but most of the forests have been cut over now and production of such products is largely limited to pulpwood and logs being harvested and trucked to mills in other sections.

The act of incorporation, ratified by the North Carolina General Assembly February 17, 1903, is as follows:

"An Act To Incorporate the Town of Hassell, in the County of Martin.

"The General Assembly of North Carolina Do Enact:

"Section 1. That the town of Hassell, in the county of Martin, be and is hereby incorporated by the name and style of the Town of Hassell, and it shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated towns.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town be as follows: Beginning in the center of the Dogville Cross Roads in Hamilton Township, running south 66 degrees west 3,322 feet; thence north 15 west 1,689 feet to a large oak; thence south 76½ east 1,320 feet to the Scotland Neck and Kinston branch of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company; thence along the said railroad northerly 547 feet; thence north 73 east 1,854 feet to the beginning.

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor and three commissioners and a constable, which said constable shall be appointed by said commissioners immediately upon their qualification, and the said commissioners shall have power to appoint a secretary and treasurer.

"Sec. 4. That there shall be an election of officers mentioned in this act on the first Monday in May, 1903, and thereafter in accordance with the law regulating municipal elections in this state, and the officers appointed under this act shall hold over until their successors are duly elected and qualified. All male citizens over 21 years of age, who have resided in the state two years, in the county six months, and four months within the said corporation prior to the day of election, and who are qualified and entitled to vote under the Constitution of the state, shall be entitled to vote at said elections.

"Sec. 5. That said commissioners shall have power to pass by-laws, rules and regulations for the good government of the town not inconsistent with the laws of the state and the United States, and to impose fines and penalties for violations of the town ordinances and collect the same.

"Sec. 6. That until their successors are elected and qualified, the following persons shall fill said offices: Mayor, R. N. Salsbury; commissioners, W. H. Howard, Frank L. Haislip, and John R. Eubanks.

"Sec. 7. That this act shall be in force from and after its ratification."

Town records prior to 1925 have not been located, but minute books of town board meetings held since that time are fairly complete. For most of the life of the municipality it had only three commissioners, but there were five for a time around 1925; and then, starting with 1965, five have been elected at each of the biennial elections held since. During the time the town had three commissioners, however, it also had a clerk and a treasurer who seem to have served more or less as ex-officio members of the governing board, since they usually had some part in the proceedings, as recorded in the minutes. In more recent years, after it became customary to elect five commissioners every two years, the treasurer and clerk have been chosen from members of the board.

First officials of the town—R. N. Salsbury, mayor, W. R. Howard, Frank L. Haislip, and John W. Eubanks, commissioners—were appointed in the 1903 act of incorporation to serve until an election could be held in May of that year to choose permanent officers. There are no records available, though, as to how long they served and there is nothing about their immediate successors.

A large number of Hassell citizens have been involved in the town's government over the period covered by the minute books now available, extending back to October, 1925. During that time, six men have served the town as mayor, length of their service ranging from slightly more than a year to a high of almost 19 years. E. C. Edmondson had the longest tenure in the office. He was first elected for a two-year term in May, 1941, but resigned a little less than a year later, in April, 1942, reasons not being cited in the minutes. Shortly afterwards he was appointed and served out an unexpired term as commissioner, then was elected in 1943 and served a full term in that office. He was elected mayor again in 1951, reelected eight consecutive times, and rounded out about 19 years as mayor in 1969, giving him a total of roughly 22 years of service to the town as mayor and commissioner.

G. H. Leggett served as mayor for a total of 13 years on three different occasions. He was first elected in 1925 and 1927, returned in January, 1938, when he was appointed to fill the unexpired term of C.L. Nelson after the latter moved away; was elected for a two-year term in 1939, missed about a year after completing that term, and was reappointed again to fill another unexpired term in 1942, next being reelected in 1943, 1945 and 1947, resigning in August, 1948, following some 13 years in the office. C. L. Nelson had almost nine years as mayor having been elected for two-year terms in 1929, 1931, 1933, 1935, and 1937, but moving away in January, 1938, before completing his fifth term. His son, C. L. Nelson, Jr., served about three years as mayor after being appointed to fill an unexpired term in 1948 and being elected in 1949, plus almost 18 years continuously as a commissioner, having been elected nine consecutive times, starting in 1951 and continuing through 1967. He did not complete the last term, resigning in February, 1969. His father also served one term as commissioner, starting in 1925, giving the father-and-son combination a total service to the town of more than 32 years.

Robert V. House and C. B. Burroughs are the other two who have served as mayor of Hassell since 1969. House was elected to the office in 1969, after serving one term on the board of commissioners, but he moved away in May, 1970, about a year after his election. His service to the town totaled about three years, including two as commissioner and one as mayor. Burroughs, the mayor in 1974, was appointed to serve the unexpired term of House in 1970 and was elected twice since, in 1971 and 1973. This gives him over four years in the office up to 1975, plus three years as commissioner, to which post he was elected in 1967 and 1969.

At least 27 other persons have served at one time or another, some on several occasions, as members of the board of commissioners of Hassell since 1925. There were five members of the board in 1925; but, starting in 1927, only three were elected each biennium up to 1965, when the town resumed having five members again. Several of the board members also served in the office of mayor, as listed previously. Other Hassell citizens who served as members of the board of commissioners during the past half century, and the years of their service are listed in the several following paragraphs.

G. R. Haislip and G. H. Harrison were members of the board from 1925 until 1927. J. F. Purvis was first elected in 1925 and served until 1927. He was then appointed in March, 1928, to serve the remainder of the term of D. R. Edmondson, who had moved away. Purvis was elected again in 1929 and 1931, serving as commissioner for a total of something over seven years. H. J. Haislip was elected five consecutive times, starting in 1927, but died shortly after being reelected in 1937, with P. C. Edmondson being appointed to serve the remainder of the term. R. H. Salsbury was elected to three consecutive terms, starting in 1927, but resigned a few months after being reelected in 1931, A. F. Weaver being named to succeed him. Salsbury was elected again in 1965 and served another two-year term.

Following the death of H. J. Haislip, P. C. Edmondson was appointed to complete the unexpired term in February 1935, then was elected for five consecutive terms, dropped out in 1947, but was elected again in 1949 and served a total of almost 12 years. His son, P. C. Edmondson, Jr., served almost 10 years as commissioner prior to his death in 1961, having been elected to the first of five consecutive terms in 1951. R. H. Alexander had an unusual career as a commissioner, serving a full term and parts of two other terms for a total of a little over four years. He was first appointed in March, 1961, elected a little later the same year to a full term, which expired in 1963, then was appointed again to serve out the unexpired term of George W. Ayers, Jr., who was elected in 1963, but resigned after attending only one meeting to become constable.

A. F. Weaver was appointed in August, 1931, to complete the term of R. H. Salsbury, and then was elected in 1933 and 1935, but moved away in July, 1936, when N. B. Bland was named to succeed him. After being appointed in September, 1936 to succeed Weaver, Bland had a total service of about five years, being elected commissioner in 1937 and again in 1945.

G. S. Haislip was a member of the Hassell Board of Commissioners for some 12 years, having been elected for six consecutive terms, starting with 1933. D. R. Edmondson was in the office for one term, from 1927 until 1929. Leggett Roebuck was a member for four years, from 1955 until 1959. Dewey Stalls was elected in 1959, resigning in April, 1961, to become constable, with Spencer Ayers being appointed his successor. Ayers was then elected to three terms, in 1961, 1963 and 1965, and served for a little over six years in all.

Members of the Hassell Board of Town Commissioners in 1974 were L. W. Pierce, who was rounding out 10 years of service, having been first elected in 1965; William Bland, first elected in 1967; Walter Leggett, Jr., a member since 1969; Marvin E. Haislip, who also began his service in 1969; and Dennis Briley, appointed in 1970 to complete the term of C. B. Burroughs when the latter was appointed mayor. Briley was elected in 1971 and reelected in 1973. An unusual circumstance in the 1969 election was a tie vote for commissioner between L. W. Pierce and Gordon Ray Hinson. Pierce was declared elected after Hinson declined to serve.

While there have been periods between 1925 and the present when meetings of the governing officials of Hassell have been few and far between, the regularity of their sessions is far superior to that of most towns of its size. The vast majority of their meetings were routine in nature, but the authorities were meticulous in holding primaries, elections, and performing other specified duties in accordance with state law.

Some enormous differences are to be noted in financial reports of the municipality in those earlier years with those of the present. At a meeting in March, 1926, the town commissioners voted to construct a new jail, after it was learned that repairs to the old one were not justified. D. R. Edmondson, the commissioner delegated to be in charge of the project, was authorized to pay not more than $25 per 1,000 board feet for the lumber required; and H. B. Bell was contracted to build the new jail for $15 plus any lumber left over from the old jail not used in building the new one. At the same meeting, salaries for the mayor and commissioners were set at $5 each per year, with the town clerk to be paid $12 per year for his services, plus $5 for preparing the tax list for collection. The tax levy that year totaled $202.92; and J. B. Barfield, constable and tax collector, was allowed 5 per cent, or $10.15, for his collections.

During 1927, there are a number of entries about Sunday 'blue Laws,'' ordinances regulating Sunday sales being passed, amended, repealed, reinstated, and repealed again on several occasions. It was also voted that same year to reduce the number of town commissioners from five to three. Moving up to 1935, on October 7, there was a discussion about constructing an electric line to the Edgecombe County border to connect with a Tarboro Power Company line, board members offering to meet with representatives of the power firm at their convenience. Evidently nothing came of the proposal, because in September of the following year an ordinance was adopted granting a 30-year franchise and rights of way along the town streets to the Edgecombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation, which has continued to provide electric current to the town and its citizens since.

In more recent years, there was talk of organizing a fire department at a meeting of the town commissioners on July 14, 1966, and R. H. Salsbury was designated to investigate the matter. No further action on the proposal is recorded in the minutes. In December, 1968, the board members revised automobile speed limits to conform with state law, permitting a maximum of 35 miles per hour on streets and highways in the town.

The board of commissioners, at a meeting in March, 1969, gave consideration to the purchase of an old service station in Hassell to be used as a town hall. It was followed through the following November, when the board voted, by a 3 to 2 margin, to pay $1,200 for the property and have the building renovated for use as a municipal building. Next, in March, 1970, a project was approved to use Powell Bill funds for curbing and guttering on Rural Secondary Road No. 1317 for 588 feet from N. C. Highway 42 in the town. In March, 1972, the board approved another project for 8,126 square yards of asphalt surfacing on several streets, the work reported as being completed the following May 1st at a cost of $6,094.50.

The wide disparity in financial conditions between the depression period of the early thirties and those of the early 1970's is reflected in some of the entries in the minutes of meetings of the board of commissioners. For instance, in August, 1932, it was reported that four men were to be employed by the town to mow the grass alongside the streets at 75 cents each for a 10-hour day, or 7½ cents per hour. Then, in August, 1973, it was reported to the board that the cost for having the streets mowed with power equipment would be $6 to $8 per hour.

The Hassell section has had postal service for a considerably longer period than it has been an incorporated town. The post office there was established January 21, 1890, more than 13 years before the village was incorporated in February, 1903. William Powell was appointed the first postmaster when the office was established, according to records of the United States Postal Service, and remained in the office for not quite two years before he was succeeded by Robert H. Salsbury on January 19, 1892. Salsbury was postmaster for more than 17 years, John H. Eubanks being appointed and assuming the duties on May 28, 1909, and serving almost five years until he was succeeded by Mrs. Maggie L. Starling on May 12, 1914.

Mrs. Starling was postmaster at Hassell for more than 34 years, longer than any other person in the history of the office. She was married for the second time during that period, exact date not given, but her name in the official records was changed from Maggie L. Starling to Maggie L. Leggett on September 27, 1920. She held the office until her death May 18, 1948, and was succeeded by her husband, George H. Leggett, who was named acting postmaster June 11, 1948, receiving the permanent appointment October 15, 1948, and holding the office for more than 16 years until his retirement October 31, 1964. Between them, they were postmaters at Hassell for something over 50 years. Mrs. Linnie Lilley Bland served as acting postmaster from October 31, 1964, until Mrs. C. B. Burroughs assumed duties of the office July 16, 1965.

Commercial enterprises in Hassell about the time the town was established were mostly centered on the operation of sawmills, cotton gins, farm supply stores, and similar undertakings. There were at least three general mercantile businesses there before the turn of the century, listed in an old 1897 yearbook as G. L. Cooper & Son, H. A. Nicholson, and Mrs. A. E. Salsbury. About the time the town was incorporated, or a little later, R. H. Salsbury and J. A. Everett each had a cotton gin and John H. Eubanks had a sawmill in operation there. Other farm supply, general merchandise, and similar retail establishments—as well as an occasional cotton gin—located there over the years include those of Salsbury Supply Company, John W. Eubanks, Hassell Gin Company, F. W. Salsbury & Brother, Paul Salsbury, H. J. & W. F. Haislip, F. L. Haislip, and others.

Several of the individuals and firms listed also served as brokers and commission merchants for various farm products. Motor vehicles and improved roads have wrought extensive changes, and Hassell—as well as other small farm trading centers—is no longer as important to the economic well-being of its section as in former years; but the town itself is performing its municipal functions in a manner to continue its command of the respect and affection of citizens of the area, and it looks to the future with confidence.

BEAR GRASS

Originally incorporated on February 16, 1909, Bear Grass is not only the youngest town in Martin County and the eleventh to be established, but it also is the smallest, having an official population of only 56 in 1910, about a year after it had been incorporated, and 99 in 1970. It remained active as a municipality for upwards of a quarter century until near the end of the depression years, then became dormant around 1934 and no town meetings or elections were held for another quarter of a century. Interest was revived in 1961, and the town was again incorporated and has carried out its civic obligations with vigor and dispatch since that time.

According to records of the U. S. Postal Service, Bear Grass had a post office for a brief period of nearly two years during the latter part of the 1800's. Wiley P. Mangum was appointed postmaster on March 3, 1885, the date the office was established, and continued in the position until January 8, 1887, when it was discontinued. Mail for people in the community was then handled through the post office at

Keelsville, N. C., believed to have been located in either Beaufort or Pitt County, since there is no record of any office by that name in Martin County. It is not known how long Keelsville remained the mail center for Bear Grass, but in 1974 residents of that section were being served by two rural routes from the Williamston post office.

Bear Grass is one of two county towns which is located on neither a waterway or a railroad and dependent entirely on public roads for its transportation facilities. Nevertheless, it is the center of a closely knit and well-adjusted farming community with ample religious, educational, and cultural organizations and facilities and a spirit of civic pride that yields to no other section of the state or nation.

The town is located in a township by the same designation, the name meaning a certain type of yucca plant found growing in profusion in portions of the area. The plant has sword-shaped evergreen leaves and clusters of white lily-like flowers on a tall stalk, the leaf fiber being extremely strong and used by early settlers for hanging meat in their smokehouses. According to Harry Wynne, who gathered and published a considerable amount of historical information about the section in a mimeographed school newspaper several years ago, first recorded reference to a place by the name is contained in a grant for 689 acres of land from the Earl of Granville, last surviving Lord Proprietor, to John Swinson, one of the first settlers in the region, mentioning ''Bear Grass Swamp'' in connection with boundaries of the tract.

Those first settlers were mostly small farmers, cotton and corn being the principal crops, with some sheep, cattle, and hogs being raised principally for home consumption. Forest products, including making of shingles, tar, and turpentine, also contributed to the income of the early arrivals. The section became fairly well settled for those times during the first half of the 19th century; but, being more or less isolated from the principal trading and shipping points—most of them being located on the Roanoke and Tar Rivers—the village of Bear Grass began to develop from a very real need for a community center. The methods and means of transportation were not only time-consuming and laborious but completely impossible at certain times of the year on account of weather and road conditions.

The Bear Grass Primitive Baptist Church was organized and a meeting house bulit in 1828, marking the first step in development of a central point for residents of the community. This was followed in succeeding years by general stores, barrooms, licensed distilleries, and service establishments of various kinds, including blacksmith and repair shops.

Reuben Rogerson opened one of the first general stores in the area in 1880, located just northeast of the present town. He later added a steam-powered sawmill and cotton gin nearby, built on two levels, the sawmill being on the ground and the cotton gin in the loft above. The milling was custom work, farmers usually "snaking" logs to the mill by oxen. The gin was small and rather slow, cotton usually being dumped directly into it from the wagons after they had been pulled up to the second level on a wooden ramp. After ginning, the cotton was funneled into a screw-type press on the ground floor for baling. Rogerson also operated a licensed still in his yard, making mostly grape and apple brandy. An old-timer is quoted as saying, "Reuben had a fine place. A man could get up in the morning, go to "Rube's,' buy his groceries, have his logs sawed, gin a bale of cotton and return home with a headache before nightfall."

The cotton gin and mill were completely destroyed by fire in 1908. Due to his advanced age and declining health, Rogerson closed the store a few years later, after several other general stores had been established in Bear Grass, and the building was torn down about 30 years ago. The old Rogerson home, now around 150 years old, is still standing. It was built by Eli Rogerson, who was born in 1804, shortly after his marriage, and is presently occupied by a grandson, Buck Rogerson, son of Reuben. The three generations of Eli, Rueben, and Buck Rogerson span a period of 171 years, from 1804 to 1975.

In 1895, James Harris and King Cowan opened a store in Bear Grass to deal in general merchandise, and this was followed after 1900 by a number of other establishments. One was a blacksmith and machine shop operated by Henry Harrison, Sr., the business being continued to the present by a son, Leroy Harrison, as a general repair shop for automobiles, farming implements, and equipment. Those who have operated general stores in the village since the early days include A. B. Ayers, Sr., Javan Roers, Nathan Rogers, A. B. Rogerson & Brother, D. Bailey & Brothers, Terry Brothers, Rogers Supply Company, and others.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the new merchants and increased business spurred interest in incorporating the town. Among those active in the planning of the movement were Reddick Roberson, A. B. Ayers, Sr., Javan Rogers, Nathan Rogers, Henry Harrison, Sr., and Warner A. Bailey. Several meetings were held and Harry W. Stubbs, Martin County Representative and Sate Senator for many years, was persuaded to introduce a bill to incorporate Bear Grass. It was one of the few bills sponsored by him during his long period of service in the legislature.

In addition to its other unusual features, Bear Grass is described as being exactly round in both its acts of incorporation, one of the few towns in the state to be thus designated. Its boundaries were first described as being a radius of 500 yards in all directions from a giant oak which stood at the intersection of two highways forming a crossroads at the center of the town. Text of the original act of incorporation, Chapter 74, Private Laws of North Carolina, ratified February 16, 1909, reads as follows:

"An Act to Incorporate the Town of Bear Grass, Bear Grass Township, in the County of Martin:

"Secion 1. That the town of Bear Grass, Bear Grass Township, in the County of Martin, be and is hereby incorporated, by the name and style of the town of Bear Grass, and it shall be subject to all the provisions of law now existing in reference to incorporated Towns.

"Sec. 2. That the corporate limits of said town shall be as follows: All that territory within a radius of 500 yards from a certain white oak on the east side public road, near a well at the stores of Rogers Brothers and Cowing Brothers.

"Sec. 3. That the officers of said town shall consist of a mayor, four commissioners and a constable, and the said commissioners shall have power to appoint a secretary and treasurer.

"Sec. 4. That there shall be an election of officers mentioned in this act on the first Monday in May, 1909, and thereafter in accordance with the law regulating municipal elections in this state. The officers appointed under this act shall hold over until their successors are duly elected and qualified.

"Sec. 5. That said commissioners shall have power to pass by-laws, rules and regulations for the good government of the town, not inconsistent with the laws of this state and the United States, and to impose fines and penalties for the violation of the town ordinances and collect the same.

"Sec. 6. That until their successors are elected and qualified, the following persons shall fill said offices: Mayor, W. R. Robertson; commissioners, J. N. Rogers, R. C. Bailey, Alonzo Cowing, and Javan Rogers; constable, Nathan Rogers.

"Sec. 7. That this act shall be in force and effect from and after its ratification."

Exact population of the town at the time of its incorporation is not known, but it was only 56 in 1910, the year following. However, it continued to flourish, almost doubling in size in the following decade, reaching a count of 108 in 1920 and a peak of 131 in 1930. The depression years started a downward trend, population dropping to 114 in 1940, but climbing back to 128 in 1950 before dropping to 103 in 1960 and to 99 in 1970. Interest in civic affairs also dropped sharply during the depression, and there was no active government from 1934 to 1961, when it was reincorporated with the same boundaries but a new set of officials.

W. Reddick Robertson was appointed mayor when the town was originally incorporated in 1909 and held that position until his death in 1918. Not only was he a leading citizen of the community who had held the offices of justice of the peace and constable, but he was also owner of much of the land included in the corporate limits. Names of commissioners who served during the early history of the town are not included in records presently available, except for the four appointed in the act of incorporation: J. N. Rogers, R. C. Bailey, Alonzo Cowing, and Javan Rogers. Javan Rogers moved up from commissioner to mayor following the death of Robertson in 1918, and he likewise served for about nine years before William A. Brown was elected in 1927.

The municipal government became dormant after 1934 as a result of the depression, Mayor Brown declaring "it was just about impossible to get anybody interested in affairs of the town" during those hard times. A few of the local business concerns managed to weather the depression, and when economic conditions began to improve in the late thirties some of the old stores reopened. There was said to be little enthusiasm at that time for reactivating the town government, however, and it was not until 1961 that any action was taken to restore it.

A number of citizens served as part-time policemen of the town prior to 1934, when the municipality became dormant. Their services were offered more or less on the same basis as those of volunteer firemen in later years, with the township constable also being counted on for aid in law enforcement when needed. Nathan Rogers, a young merchant, served as the first policeman, followed in later years by Charlie Ellis, E. C. Harrison, Eli Thomas, and Lewis Bullock. The office was not restored after the town government was reactivated in 1961.

Early in 1961, several meetings were held to discuss plans for reincorporation, leaders of the movement including A. B. Ayers, C. Buie Bailey, and Leroy Harrison. It was pointed out that as an incorporated town, Bear Grass would be entitled to allocations from the state and county from Powell Bill, intangible, beer and wine, fire district, ABC, and other taxes and funds; and that there was a need in the community for street lights, street improvements, a fire department, a water system, and other civic improvements. After studying the old charter, it was decided to reactivate it without change, as was done on June 21, 1961, by ratification of an act introduced by Representative E. S. Peel, Jr. C. Buie Bailey was appointed mayor in the act along with the following five commissioners: Irving Terry, J. W. Sawyer, Pete Rogers, Sampson Hodges, and Virgil Wobbleton.

At the first meeting of the new mayor and governing board, A. B. Ayers, Jr., was appointed clerk, a position he was still holding in 1974. Later in the year 1961, 14 street lights were installed and a tax rate of 50 cents per $100 property valuation was fixed, later reduced to 33 one-third cents. At the 1963 election, the same mayor and members of the board of commissioners were elected, with the exception of W. E. Rogerson replacing Sampson Hodges as a commissioner.

In 1965 Bear Grass got its first woman commissioner, Mrs. Helen R. Leggett, and she has been reelected every two years since that time. Others elected in 1965 included C. Buie Bailey as mayor for the third straight time; J. W. Sawyer, C. Irving Terry, John R. Rogers, Jr., and Frank Dixon as the other members of the board of commissioners. In 1967, Bailey began his fourth term as mayor; Helen R. Leggett, John R. Rogers, Jr., and Frank Dixon were reelected commissioners, Alton Harris and Robert Bailey were the new commissioners. Javan H. "Pete" Rogers was elected mayor in 1969; the commissioners being Mrs. Leggett, J. R. Rogers, Jr., Robert Bailey, H. E. Harrell, and W. E. Rogers. The same officials were elected again in 1971, except that R. Otis Farmer replaced W. E. Rogers as commissioner.

The town adopted the non-partisan plurality system of electing municipal officers in 1973, and changed the time of election from Tuesday after the first Monday in May to Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each odd-numbered year, with the officials assuming their duties at the first regular meeting in January following the election. Officers elected in 1973 were exactly the same as in 1971, as follows: Javan H. "Pete" Rogers, Jr., mayor; Mrs. Helen R. Leggett, H. Eugene Harrell, John R. Rogers, Jr., R. Otis Farmer, and Robert Bailey, commissioners.

The Bear Grass Township Volunteer Fire Dept. was organized in 1965 with 30 members, including Chief C. Buie Bailey and Assistant Chief Irving Terry, who have headed the department since its organization. Other officers of the group when it was founded were W. Dan Peele, president; Jim Sawyer, secretary; and Javan H. Rogers, Jr., treasurer. In 1974 the officers were W. Dan Peele, president; Eli David Harrison, vice president; and Javan H. Rogers, Jr., secretary and treasurer. The department has two units of motorized equipment, a modern pumper and hose wagon with a 600-

gallon auxiliary water tank and a 1,200-gallon tanker truck. A building to house the equipment was constructed in 1965 and is also used as a town hall. Members of the department receive no pay and most of them have attended training courses in use of the equipment and fire-fighting methods conducted at various times in several localities of the county in recent years. The department is rendering a valuable service not only to the town but to the entire township.

Through cooperation of Farmers Home Administration, the town completed construction and installation of a community water system in 1974. Planning and work on the project had been underway for about a year when the plant was completed and put into operation on June 1, 1974. The installation included a deep well, pumping equipment, a 3,745-gallon hydro-pneumatic tank, and approximately two miles of pipe when the water was turned on. There were 41 customers when the project was completed, with more being added constantly. The entire project was financed by a $35,000 loan and a direct grant of $28,000 to the town by the Farmers Home Administration. Fire protection for the village was enhanced considerably by the installation, which included six fire hydrants at convenient locations.

During the so-called "prohibition era," Bear Grass acquired widespread—and, in many respects—unjustified notoriety as one of the principal "moonshining" or "bootlegging" centers of the country. Actually, the section was noted for quality, not quantity, in the making of its spirits, and that reputation was attained long before legislative fiat made it illegal to manufacture and sell the brandies for which the community first became famous.

Bear Grass had a lengthy history of making alcoholic beverages at government-licensed stills long before prohbition. One of the first commercial establishments in the community was a bar operated by Wiley Roberson before the Civil War. There were numerous legal distilleries operating there between 1880 and 1908. Some of the owners and operators were Simon Ward, Reddick Roberson (later first mayor of the town), Reuben Rogerson, Bob Peele, David Harris, Sam Rogerson, Davis Roberson, and Noah Gurganus. The average still was not large, about 60-gallon capacity, and usually housed in a small building in the owner's yard. They were noted for excellent brandies, made from native fruits. Grape brandy was most prevalent, but apple, peach, and plum brandies were also quite common.

North Carolina voted itself "dry" in 1908, making the manufacture of alcoholic beverages completely unlawful. Some of the unlicensed stills were simply moved from out in the open to the backwoods and swamps and were continued to be used for making brandies, mostly for the use of the operators and their friends. There was relatively little "bootlegging" until after the close of World War I, but a revolution occurred in the making of illegal whiskey after the 18th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution became effective in January, 1920. A resident of the community put it this way: "Everybody wanted a drink, and we knew how to make it." The know-how of the old brandy-makers was put to use, and the section went on to acquire its reputation as a center for the illegal industry. Although the output could not have been as large as attributed, everybody knew about Bear Grass. Residents of larger towns in the county and state have had their civic pride somewhat shattered on numerous occasions, after telling where they were from while visiting other sections, to be asked, "How far is that from Bear Grass?"

Following repeal of the 18th Amendment in December, 1933, and return of legal whiskey to Martin County about two years later, the manufacture of "moonshine" became less and less profitable, until it is more or less negligible at present. An old-timer in the Bear Grass section was quoted recently as saying: "Thirty years ago I could stand in my yard and see the smoke from three or four stills, and now I don't even know where to get a drink." In later years, Bear Grass has become noted chiefly for its outstanding farmers and community spirit.

The spirit and civic pride of the people are perhaps best reflected in the loyal support given by them to the numerous churches and schools of the section. Another striking example was the purchase of the old Bear Grass teacherage property in 1964 and developing it into a community center and meeting place for young people, clubs, churches, and individuals. The $3,000 purchase price and cost of renovations and improvements are being paid off by the organizations and groups which use the facility, now renamed "The Yucca House."

CHAPTER V

STATE GOVERNMENT

1788-1789 CONVENTIONS

Several Martin County men had prominent parts in the early United States and North Carolina governments. In addition to their activities in supporting the revolutionary movement in the early 1770s, Martin County men figured in the constitutional convention held in Hillsborough on July 25, 1788, and other deliberations.

Representing Martin County at the Hillsborough convention were: Whitmel Hill, Nathan Mayo, William Slade, Thomas Hunter and Wililam M'Kinzie.

The 1788 convention in Hillsborough considered the proposed constitution for the future government of the United States. The convention, debating the issue at length, finally voted neither to ratify nor reject the proposed constitution of the United States.

On Saturday, August 2, 1788, Thomas Hunter of Martin County was granted leave to absent himself, along with several others, from the service of the convention.

A second U. S. constitutional convention was held on the third Monday in November, 1789, in Fayetteville, Martin County was represented there by William Williams, John Stewart, Nathan Mayo and Thomas Hunter, the latter taking his seat on November 19, 1789. The Fayetteville convention adopted the proposed U. S. constitution on November 21, 1789, the group, at the same time, making application for certain amendments.

The 1788 Hillsborough convention was to have decided on a place or site for a permanent seat of N. C. State government. No definite place could be selected and the location of such a seat of government was turned back to the North Carolina General Assembly for a final decision. Wake County was suggested as a possible site.

North Carolina was among the last states to ratify the proposed constitution.

CHAPTER VI

COUNTY OFFICERS

CLERKS OF COURT

Prior to the formation of Martin County in March, 1774, governmental activities were centered in the hands of justices of the peace, operating in Tyrrell and Halifax counties, parts of which were later to be known as Martin County or Parish of St. Martin.

Immediately after the formation, steps were taken to establish a seat of government in Martin at Skewarkey. The first clerk of court, Thomas Stewart, was named to the position by the several justices of the peace on the second Tuesday in April, 1774. The justices were in session at the time on the lands of Thomas Stewart, near Skewarkey. The legislation establishing Martin County provided for the justices to hold sessions in various parts of the county, and another of their early meetings was held under a tree on the lands of John Griffin on what is now known as the Ballard road in Poplar Point Township.

Stewart served as clerk until January, 1777, when he was ordered to turn the records over to Thomas Hunter. Apparently Stewart was playing close to the side of the Tories. As far as it can be learned, Stewart was never charged, but he is believed to have left the county. Little or nothing has been learned where he located, and little has been found about the first Martin court clerk since his departure.

The records vary a bit and the years of tenure are not certain for several of the court clerks.

It has been difficult to determine exactly the meaning of "clerks". There were masters and clerks in equity, probate clerks and Superior Court clerks. In quite a few personal papers, reference was made only to clerks. However, it is fairly certain the following were recognized as Superior Court clerks:

Thomas B. Hunter succeeded Stewart in 1777, serving until 1795; John B. Hunter, 1795-1810; Henry B. Hunter, 1810-1828; (Joseph Biggs was listed as deputy clerk during that period); Thomas Watts, 1828-1834; Joseph D. Biggs, 1834-1846; Lawrence Johnson, 1846-1858; William H. Harrell, 1858-1867; John Hyman, 1867-1868; Joseph M. Sitterson, 1868-1878; W. T. Crawford, 1878-1894; N. S. Peel, 1894-1898; J.

A. Hobbs, 1898-1914; R. J. Peel, 1914-1933; Mrs. R. J. Peel, 1933-1934- L. Bruce Wynne, 1934-1970; Mary E. Keel Davenport, 1970-. William Slade was assistant clerk in 1825.

The 36-year tenure, held by Wynne, was the longest on record, followed by Thomas B. Hunter and R. J. Peel with 19 years each.

Samuel Williams co-signed Thomas Hunter's bond on March 9, 1778.

On June 10, 1806, Lemuel Kennedy, James Burroughs, Ebenezer Slade, John Calland, Ebenezer Smithwick, Anthony Burroughs and John Reddick signed John B. Hunter's bond, and Joseph Biggs notarized it. For the next number of years until fairly recent times bond records are scanty. In more recent years bonds were bought from recognized bonding companies.

It is not certain just what offices they held, but apparently quite a few persons served as masters and clerks in equity in this county, the group possibly being closely associated with the justices of the peace.

From 1801 to 1810 William Barden was listed as clerk. He was succeeded by John Luten in May, 1807, and his bond was signed by Jeremiah Slade and Kenneth Clark. On May 5, 1807, Joseph Biggs was appointed clerk and master in equity. His bond was signed by Jeremiah Slade, Thomas Wynn and James Burroughs.

Apprently John Luten served several terms, possibly from 1807 until after 1821. On May 9, 1810, Jeremiah Slade and Samuel Hyman signed his bond, notarized by A. Smithwick. On November 1, 1813, Luten was again appointed clerk.. Jeremiah Slade, Samuel Hyman and Henry B. Hunter co-signed the bond and John S. Duggan notarized it. Luten appears in the records a last time as far as it can be learned on May 10, 1821, when he was appointed clerk and Benjamin F. and Jeremiah Slade signed his bond.

Peter B. Martin was appointed clerk and master in equity on July 6, 1809, and Ebenezer and Jeremiah Slade signed it.

Benjamin F. Slade was appointed clerk and master in equity on May 5, 1819 by the magistrates (justices of the peace). William Darlet and Edward Yellowly signed the bond and Samuel Hyman notarized it.

The next mention of a clerk and master inequity was made on December 12, 1827, when S. M. Watts was approved. S. M. Watts is again mentioned as clerk until about 1836.

John S. Short was listed as clerk in 1867 and 1868.

When the radical party scored a carpetbagger victory in the county in May 1868, Elder C. B. Hassell, master and clerk in equity from about 1835, was directed to turn the papers of the office over to Superior Court Clerk Joseph M. Sitterson in September, 1868. The courts in equity, apparently in accordance with directions from afar, were abolished in May, 1868. Following the September order, Elder Hassell held on to the books until November, 1868.

It is apparent that Elder Hassell's 33-year tenure was the longest in the courts of equity in the county.

REGISTER OF DEEDS

Strange as it may seem, there are only incomplete records of some of the Martin County registers of deeds, the office where most of the county records are supposed to be kept. It is quite possible some of the records were lost when the courthouse was moved from its location near the river to a new structure built on the crest of the river hill and others were lost when the hill courthouse was destroyed in 1884. Many of the county records were lost in the fire.

In most instances the record of registers' names was found in various documents, in personal papers and references found in other places. Some of them are in conflict, and some have not been found for certain periods.

Francis Ward,, Sr., came to this country prior to 1742, and located on Welch's Creek, possibly near what is now known as Ward's Bridge, apparently in present Martin County. If he did live in this county, he is believed to have been the county's first adopted son as register of deeds. Records are not definite, but he is thought to have practiced medicine in the lower part of this county and in what is now known as Plymouth. He served as register in 1742, 1755-1758, 1770-1773. Old records show that James Craven served as register in 1736; James Conner, 1743, and Evan Jones, 1748.

Soon after the county was formed the first register of deeds, William Williams, was appointed by the July court, 1774. He was succeeded by Blake Baker Wiggins in July, 1777. The next mention of a register of deeds was on March 19, 1787, when Daniel Biggs was serving in the office. Biggs was in the office on May 22, 1805, and apparently served either until 1820 or 1834. If Biggs was in office from 1787 until 1834 then he held the office longer than any other one.

A man by the name of Beasley was listed as register from October, 1834, until January, 1837, when he was succeeded by John R. Lanier who apparently served until 1847.

The record of registers of deeds is accepted as fairly accurate from 1847 when S. W. Watts assumed the office and served until 1850, followed by W. C. Eborn who was in the office until 1860. John Hyman was in the office from 1860 until 1863.

P. G. Foster, the man who reportedly operated the old water mill, later known as Daniel and Staton mill and believed to have lived where Memorial Baptist Church now stands, was listed as register from 186 to 1868. However, the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company legal also had about the longest tenure of any register in the State during

After the radical party election victory in 1868, W. C. Eborn was again in the office, serving from 1868 until 1870. He was followed by J. L. Ewell who was in the office until 1872. Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1872 lists Benjamin Goodman as register in 1872. Other records show that William Johnson served in the office from 1872 until 1876.

Gideon Lamb apparently served from 1876 until 1882, when W. H. Bennett took over and served until 1888.

Other registers include the following: J. A. Teel, 1888-1898; Wm. C. Manning, Sr., 1898-1908; A. S. Coffield, 1908-1912; Samuel S. Brown, 1912-1924; J. Sam Getsinger, 1924-1967; Julia Everett Manning, 1967-

Listed among the early deputy registers of deeds, according to random references, were: G. R. Clements, 1848; and Leo Clary, 1863. While there is some doubt about the tenure of Daniel Biggs, it is definite that J. Sam Getsinger served 43 years in the register's office. Getsinger was rated one of the top registers in the State. He also had about the longest tenures of any register in the State during the current century.

SHERIFFS

Justices of the peace figured prominently in the early history of the county and even prior to 1774 when Martin was a part of other counties. However, in April, 1774, about a month after the county was formed, governmental functions started spreading to other officers.

Recommended by the justices of the peace, the first county sheriff, Kenneth McKenzie, began the duties in April, 1774. He was one of three recommended by the justices of the peace. The others recommended were Thomas Hunter and John Hardison. Within a short time, McKenzie presented a commission from the royal governor, Josiah Martin. A year later McKenzie was succeeded by Thomas Hunter in 1775. Another of the first three men recommended in 1774, John Hardison, was sheriff in 1777, apparently serving until 1784.

Unofficial records show that Francis Ward served as sheriff in 1785.

While the dates of their tenure are not definite, other county sheriffs include:

John Hardison, 1777; John Kennedy, 1784-1785; John Ballard, 1786; Edward Griffin, 1798. According to a rental receipt of May 10, 1798, reproduced in the book "The Amazing Madame Jumel", pages 43 and 44, Edward Griffin, sheriff of the county, signed the receipt with an "X".

Ebenezer Slade entered office in 1799, and apparently served until 1817. The next listing found shows that S. Burroughs began serving at that time, and apparently was in office until October, 1833, when G. Perry was listed as being in the office on January, 1834. Perry was succeeded by Sheppard who served until January, 1835.

It is not certain who held the office from January, 1835,until October, 1835. Samuel M. Smithwick was listed in the office from October, 1835, to October, 1838.

Other sheriffs include: Thomas Phillips, 1839; B. M. Selby, 1845; A. S. Mooring, 1845-1850; William W. Wood, January 10, 1853; W. W. Ward, 1859. It is possible that W. W. Wood and W. W. Ward are the same. In 1860, William Thomas Crawford was appointed to complete the unexpired term of William W. Ward who is believed to have resigned to volunteer for service in the Army of the Confederacy.

Crawford served until 1868, and he was succeeded by R. B. Salsbury who held the office until 1872. There is a break in the list from that date until 1875 when Wm. J. Hardison took over the office and served until 1892. Hardison, recorded as one of the most popular sheriffs the county ever had, served a second term in 1894-1896. During the meantime, Joseph R. Lanier held the office in 1892-1894.

Joseph D. Biggs was in office during the 1896-1898 term. He was succeeded by J. C. Crawford who served from 1898 until 1916. Other sheriffs include: J. H. Page, 1916-1919; H. T. Roberson, 1919-1926; A. L. (Baldy) Roebuck, 1926-1929; C. B. Roebuck, his son, 1929 to August, 1949; Murray W. Holloman, August, 1949 to 1954; and Raymond Rawls, 1954 to the present.

During the early years, Martin County changed sheriffs every year or two with a few exceptions. Ebenezer Slade apparently served from 1799 until 1817, a tenure of 18 years. Prior to 1900 the longest tenure of service, 19 years, was held by William J. Hardison. Already the present sheriff, Raymond Rawls has established a longevity record, starting in 1949 and continuing in the office at the time, a period of 25 years. Prior to the present time, C. B. Roebuck held the longevity record with 20 years, and J. C. Crawford and Ebenezer Slade were fourth with 18 years of service.

Incidentally, Martin County has had able sheriffs during its 200 years of history.

One of the most popular officers ever in Martin County was William Jonathan Hardison. He was born in Beaufort County on November 18, 1827, and died in Williamston on July 6, 1908.

Sheriff from 1874 to 1896, he was re-elected seven times without a dissenting vote having been cast against him. He retired in 1892 but answered a call to fill the office made vacant by the death of John R. Lanier. He went down in 1896 in the Republican-Populist combine assault.

COUNTY TREASURERS

While it is apparent that the duties were handled by others, no record of an official county treasurer has been found of one prior to 1869. Old personal papers show that John Watts was treaurer in 1869, serving until 1876. He was succeeded in 1876 by Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell who served until April, 1880.

Other treasurers, their tenure dates noted, include: Noah S. Godard, April, 1880- November 30, 1886; Samuel Romulus Biggs, Sr., December, 1886-November 30, 1898; Hugh M. Burras, December 1, 1898-November 30, 1908; C. D. Carstarphen, Sr., December 1, 1908-May, 1929; Wm. Henry Carstarphen, his son, May, 1929-November 30, 1930; C. A. Harrison, December, 1930-January 1, 1940; Mrs. C. A. Harrison, January 1, 1940-November 30, 1940; Richard Hall Smith, December 1, 1940-March 4, 1957; W. L. Howell, March 4, 1957 to the present.

According to the best records available, Chas. D. Carstarphen held the office longer than any other man, followed by W. L. Howell, the incumbent, who has 18 years of service.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

There is little record of any organized form of government in Martin County prior to 1735 when Edward Smithwick and Samuel Wheatly (Whitley) were mentioned as serving as justices of the peace in what was then known as Tyrrell County. Land grants were issued along about that time to the Smithwicks in the islands section of Williams Township and to the Whitleys near Williamston.

The first mention of an Edward Smithwick dates back to the latter part of 1701 when he gave an acre of land for an Episcopal church on what is believed to have been Hayes' plantation near Edenton. It is not certain if that Edward Smithwick came to Martin County or if it was his son serving as justice of the peace in 1735.

The early government of this area was vested mostly in the hands of justices of the peace, beginning certainly about 1735. They constituted the local courts, and handled most of the government functions for many years.

Most of the early justices of the peace were recommended by the representatives in the provincial assembly and later the North Carolina General Assembly, the methods of filling the positions varying from time to time over the years. In most instances the governor would commission the nominees. In other instances the candidates would go into the primaries to gain nomination.

No records have been found about justices of the peace in what is now known as Martin County from 1735 until 1760. It is possible that Edward Smithwick and Samuel Wheatly (Whitley) served some or a greater part of the time between 1735 and 1760. In the latter year, Robert Lanier Daniel was serving as a justice of the peace, possibly in Griffins Township, then a part of Tyrrell County.

The next mention of a man serving part of Tyrrell County, now Martin, in the provincial government were Thomas Wiggins, 1761; following were Thomas Hunter, John Lewellen, Kenneth McKenzie, James Sherrod and Ebenezer Slade, Jr., all in 1772. Several of the group served right into 1774 when the county was formed and even in later years. Several of the justices were elevated to county offices, vacating their seats in the justices' courts.

The first justices listed when the county was formed were William Wiggins, Whitmel Hill, Thomas Wiggins, Jr., John Everett, James Sherrod, John Lewellen, William Outerbridge, John Hardison, John Stewart, Francis Ward, Thomas Hunter and Kenneth McKenzie. Only half the number, Francis Ward, Thomas Hunter, John Hardison, Kenneth McKenzie, John Lewellen and James Sherrod qualified for the office in 1774.

Before many of the major county offices were filled, government in Martin leaped forward in 1776 when twenty-two men were named justices of the peace, including John Hardison, Edward Smithwick, Jr., William Slade, William Sherrod, John Lewellen, John Everit (Everett), Whitmel Hill, Thomas Wiggins, Thomas Hunter, Kenneth McKenzie, Francis Ward, Samuel Smithwick, Samuel Williams, John Ross, John Kennedy, John Griffin, Nathan Mayo, Blake Baker Wiggins, Joshua Taylor, John Perry, James Moore and Thomas Riddick.

In 1777 the following justices were listed in the county: William Slade, Whitmel Hill, Francis Ward, Samuel Smithwick, Nathan Mayo, Joshua Taylor and John Hardison.

The tenure of office of most of the justices could not be determined. However, the following were listed in given years: John Taylor and Jesse Cherry, 1788; Maurice Moore and William Griffin, 1789; William Barden, 1790; Warren Andrews, Hardy Stallings and Ebenezer Smithwick, 1792; Benjamin Burroughs, 1793; William Hardison, 1794; Jesse Jones, 1795; William McKenzie and Timothy Ward, 1796; James Carmer, 1797; John Hyman, Robert Bennett, John Newberry and Thomas Hyman, 1798; Joel Cherry, Joseph Biggs, Thomas Wynn, James Wiggins and John Griffin, 1801;

Stephen Fagan, William H. Roberson and Sterling Rogers, 1802; William M. Clark, 1803; John Calland, Richard Taylor and James Burroughs, 1804; William Boyet and Lewis Williams, 1805; James Moore, Lemuel Kennedy and Henry Hooten, 1806; Bartholomew Weathersby and John Johnston, 1807; Thomas Stewart, Josiah Riddick, Luke Ross, Kedar Biggs and Jesse Cooper, 1808; Cotton Powell, Andrew Joyner, John Riddick, Noah Perry, John Roulhac and James Shepherd, 1809; Simon Smithwick, and John Watson, 1810; James Burroughs, Abner Cockburn (Coburn) and Henry Robason (Roberson), 1811; Thomas James, 1815; James Gliston and Samuel Hyman, 1816; Jesse F. Jones, Joseph Williams, Simon Smithwick, Thomas Warrenton and Benjamin F. Slade, 1818;

Joshua Watson, William Stewart, Alfred M. Slade, William Watts and Crosley Gardner, 1821; Lovick Lanier, Joel Smithwick, Joseph R. Battan, Simon S. Barber and Joseph Reddick, 1825; Lawrence Cherry at Williamston, 1827-1829; Samuel Hyman, Joseph F. Jones and David Williams, 1828; W. B. Slade, 1829; S. Johnson and W. J. Ellison, 1840; Jonathan P. Turner, 1843; Bryant Bennett, 1848; William A. Clements, 1849; F. G. Cobb and J. E. Smithwick, 1850; William C. Eborn, 1855; R. E. Weathersbee in Hamilton, 1862.

With a few exceptions between 1825 and 1873 no tenure dates are to be found, but the following forty-two justices are believed to have served during that period.

William Daniel, Noah Reddick, James J. Williams, A. W. Coffield, A. S. Cotten, James Bullock, Maurice M. Gardner, Stanley Duggan, D. B. Harrison, Benjamin C. Mayo, William Rogers, S. M. Smithwick, Jason Tice, N. B. Fagan, Samuel S. S. Shepherd, Samuel Hyman, Joseph Waldo, William B. Perry, William K. A. Williams, James L. Waters, Noah Peal, James A. Everitt, George W. Ward, James A. Nelson, John Watts, Joseph Griffin, William W. Andrews, Hoyt N. Waters, Samuel

Rogers, Abner Williams, Jonathan C. Jones, Marcus C. Cherry, John R. Lanier, Joseph D. Biggs, John B. Whitley, Henry D. Roberson, William R. W. Sherrod, David C. Guyther, Hardy S. Whitley, B. K. Wilkerson and S. C. Benjamin.

Dates for the following justices are believed fairly accurate, mostly showing the beginning of the terms: L. J. Eborn, Jonathan G. Carroway, P. W. Everitt, John S. Short, John W. Groves, Reuben S. Rogerson, C. C. Coltrain, J. J. Smith and A. W. Powers, 1873; J. P. Butler, W. T. West, W. W. Moore and A. M. Haskett, 1876; G. Durden (Darden), 1877; J. L. Ewell, John Watts and J. B. Lanier, 1878; Justus Everitt, J. T. Hyman, Joseph R. Roberson and E. W. Ange, 1879; J. H. Johnson, 1880; G. Durden, and B. M. Whitehurst, 1881; Stanley Purrington, T. W. Ward, J. A. B. Cooper, G. W. Andrews, W. H. Roberson, A. L. Mizelle, and G. D. Gurganus, 1882.

There is no record of any justices of the peace between 1882 and 1889, the minute book apparently having been lost.

C. C. Waters, Seth R. Hardison, David R. Daniel, George W. Griffin, J. A. Lilley, and C. B. Harrison, 1889; George L. Whitley, William Powell, S. D. Ward, H. W. Holliday, Stanley Ayers and James A. Coburn, 1890; Thomas H. Coffield, 1891; W. J. Reddick, M. A. Roberson, George E. Brown, J. R. Ballard, N. M. Worsley and W. H. Roberson, 1892; V. R. Taylor and S. F. Burnett, 1893; S. E. Hardison and J. D. Simpson, 1895; M. B. Bazemore, 1897; Plenny Peel, 1898; George M. Burras and J. C. Roberson, 1899; George W. Newell, J. T. Ross and J. C. Jordan, 1900; J. L. Davenport, A. L. Bellflower and Joseph E. Manning, 1901;

D. S. Powell and F. L. Johnson, 1902; S. L. Ross, J. L. Whitfield and J. L. Coltrain, 1904; J. T. Waldo, T. S. Purvis and L. A. Bailey, 1905; B. F. Godwin, John T. Hyman and T. E. Darden, 1906; Robert Harris, A. S. Coffield, B. F. Perry and M. W. Ange, 1907; C. A. Askew, Sr., 1911; H. C. Harrington, 1913; S. H. Pritchard, R. J. House and M. P. Taylor, 1914; F. M. Edmondson, N. W. Worsley, S. F. Everett, J. W. Roberson, J. A. Getsinger, J. H. Everett, J. L. Roberson, G. M. Roberson and J. W. Hines, 1917; C. James and A. Corey, 1918; J. S. Ayers and C. D. Perkins, 1919; C. L. Nelson, 1920; J. A. Everett, 1922; C. P. Hopkins, 1923;

C. B. Riddick, J. B. Whitfield and J. B. Purvis, 1924; Jesse A. Leggett, W. S. White, Lewis H. Peel, L. J. Hardison, C. M. Hurst, Joshua L. Coltrain, J. E. Edmondson, G. H. Leggett and Robert A. Edmondson, 1926; J. D. Wynne, J. F. Crisp and Don Hyman, 1930; N. S. Riddick and H. U. Peel, 1932; Onward J. Gaylord, J. L. Hassell and D. A. Roberson, 1934; Bob Edmondson and Joe L. Riddick, 1935; J. A.

Davenport and J. H. Roebuck, 1937; D. M. Roberson, 1938; J. H. Hopkins, 1941; T. E. Goodrich, 1942; Graham Alligood, 1945; R. T. Johnson and J. S. Ayers, Jr., 1946; Ben H. R. H. Cowan and Leslie Hardison, 1947; T. T. Respass and Chas. R. Mobley, 1949; O. B. Roberson and Oliver P. Wolf, 1950; J. D. Etheridge and W. E. Early, 1951; W. M. Tetterton and B. Frank Clark, 1953; James W. Lee, 1955; H. G. Norman, 1957; J. L. Etheridge, 1959; D. A. Roberson, 1963; Horace Ray, 1968.

Most of the justices served from one to four years, but the incomplete records now available indicate that Plenny Peel of Griffins Township established a tenure record, serving from 1898 until 1932. J. L. Ewell of Williamston served from 1878 until 1905, a period of 27 years. J. W. Hines of Oak City was next in the length of service, a period of 25 years from 1917 until 1932.

While the title has been changed from justice of the peace to magistrate, W. M. Tetterton started in 1951 and continues in service with 23 years of service already behind him. W. H. Roberson served 23 years from 1882 to 1905.

Three men each served 22 years, J. P. Butler from 1876 to 1898, J. R. Ballard from 1892 to 1914, and A. L. Bellflower from 1901 to 1923. Butler was black but he was recognized as an able leader-educator who did much for black and white. He was a member of the county board of education and conducted the Butler Institute in Jamesville for a number of years.

John Hardison, one of the early justices soon after the county was formed, served 21 years from 1777 to 1798. He figured prominently in the history of the county 200 years ago. A. D. Mizelle, a prominent figure in the Primitive Baptist Church, also served 21 years as a justice from 1882 to 1903.

Four justices served 20 years: S. L. Ross from 1904 to 1924, A. Corey from 1918 to 1938; C. D. Perkins from 1919 to 1939, and G. H. Leggett from 1926 to 1946.

Apparently there have been several methods of choosing justices of the peace. The governor appointed the early justices upon recommendation of a member of the general asssembly. The legislature itself appointed the officers. In most of the counties the candidates entered the general elections, subject to a vote of the people. As far as it can be learned, only one justice, C. B. Riddick of Everetts, ever entered a general election in this county.

Martin County came under the Reformed Court Bill in 1968 when the justices of the peace offices were abolished, and the magistrates came into being. The latter were appointed by the resident Superior Court judge upon the recommendation of the clerk of court.

W. M. Tetterton, Chas. R. Mobley, W. Edmond Early and Dennis A. Roberson were the first magistrates appointed by the resident judge. When Mobley resigned about 1970 on account of ill health, Horace Ray was appointed to the position. Following the death of Roberson, Phillip Keel was appointed about 1972.

Soon after the county was included in the court reforms system, R. Vernon Bunting was appointed but he served hardly more than a week before resigning. LeRoy Godard was next appointed, and he served hardly more than a week.

In early October, 1974, Tetterton, Keel, Ray and Early were the justices serving the county. However, Early was serving only on a part-time schedule.

The change from justices of the peace to magistrates eliminated the fee system and placed the magistrates on specified salaries, running up to about $7,000 in this county.

Present magistrates have comparatively little jurisdiction. They may accept guilty pleas, but in most other cases they only arrange bonds for trial in the district court.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

It is fairly evident that the several justices of the peace, representing the various districts, handled most of the county duties during most of the early years of Martin's history. About 1869 or shortly prior to that time a Martin County Board of Commissioners was created, the new officials, nominated by the justices and appointed by the governor, assuming many of the duties previously handled by the court justices.

Apparently the county commissioners held a secondary status in the beginning but later gradually grew into the most powerful governing body in the county. Today, along with its other duties, the board controls the county finances, approving or rejecting the budgets of the various agencies or departments.

The first record of a board of commissioners in this county is found in the N. C. Business Directory for 1869. The commissioners listed that year were: A. C. Wentz, chairman; F. G. Martindale, H. J. Modlin, James L. Hardison and Bryant Bennett.

In 1872 the directory lists the following commissioners: Joel Smithwick, chairman; W. W. Moore, J. M. Sherrell (Sherrod), W. H. Everette and J. E. Peel.

The first record of meetings of the Martin County Board of Commissioners is found in the first minute book on May 1, 1876. Serving on the board at that time were: J. W. Smith, chairman; W. T. West, C. C. Coltrain, Sr., Augustus Johnson and William P. Moore. The first recorded minutes deal almost entirely with the payment of bills for the month of April, that year. The spring term of Superior Court had just been concluded and Clerk Jos. M. Sitterson presented a list of witness fees amounting to $333.01 for the term. Several liquor licenses were issued at the time by the board.

At a special meeting on May 16, 1876, the board adopted a county budget to finance activities for the fiscal year of June 1, 1876-May 31, 1877. The total amount of the budget was $12,354.66, most of the money or $10,000 to come from a property tax.

An entirely new board was elected in November, 1876, and the following were on the board: W. T. Crawford, chairman; J. A. Whitley, Hezekiah Brown, John A. Griffin and Alexander Brown. Crawford resigned on December 4, 1877, and J. L. Ewell was qualified in June, 1878.

Other commissioners and their terms as best as can be determined follow:

H. W. Mizelle, William T. Keel, Alexander Brown and J. A. Whitley, (Only four names were listed in the minutes dated August 5, 1878);

John R. Lanier, S. S. Perry, Joseph C. Smith, S. P. Everett and W. A. Haislip, 1880;

Joseph C. Smith, S. S. Perry, W. A. Haislip and S. P. Everette, 1882, (Only four names listed in the November 6, 1882, minutes);

No record of any boards is to be found between 1884 until June, 1889, when the following were listed: John D. Biggs, Sr., chairman; Z. M. Whitehurst, J. S. Peel, M. W. Ange and A. Rawls; N. S. Peel was named to fill the position when Biggs resigned on December 2, 1889;

On June 2, 1890, the following were listed: T. C. Reddick, D. C. Jones, J. D. Simpson, Kader Lilley and N. S. Peel;

James E. Everett, S. D. Ward, W. A. Haislip, R. L. Roberson and N. S. Fagan, December 5, 1892;

J. B. Coffield, Justus Everett, J. B. Roberson, B. F. Godwin and S. L. Wallace, December 3, 1894

Wheeler Martin, Sr., J. S. Peel and James Y. Brown, November, 1896, (only three names were mentioned in the December 7, 1896, December 5, 1898, December 3, 1900, December 1, 1902, December 5, 1904, and December 3, 1906 minutes;

O. K. Cowing, James Y. Brown and Joseph B. Coffield, 1898; same commissioners in 1900;

Julius T. Barnhill, Dr. U. S. Hassell and J. B. Coffield, 1902;

J. B. Coffield resigned on December 7, 1903, and R. H. Salsbury was appointed by Clerk of Court J. A. Hobbs to fill the position;

James G. Staton, George W. Griffin and R. H. Salsbury, 1904;

J. G. Staton, R. H. Salsbury and William Micajah Perry, 1906;

Hugh M. Burras, A. S. Roberson, S. E. Hardison, W. H. Daniel and J. E. Bennett, 1908;

H. M. Burras, R. H. Salsbury, J. T. Barnhill, B. S. Cowing and H. C. Spruill, 1910; same commissioners in 1912;

Dr. B. L. Long, V. R. Taylor, John L. Croom, B. S. Cowing and W. M. Perry, 1914; B. L. Long, V. R. Taylor, John L. Croom, Ben Mc Manning and Luther Hardison, 1916;

J. L. Hassell, H. S. Everett, J. H. D. Peel, Joshua L. Coltrain and Mac G. Taylor, 1918;

J. L. Hassell, Joshua Coltrain, H. C. Green, Dr. B. L. Long and Henry D. Peel, 1922; (Taylor died May 5, 1924, and T. B. Slade was appointed to complete the unexpired term);

H. C. Green, T. B. Slade, Jr., J. G. Barnhill, H. M. Burras and John N. Hopkins, 1924;

J. G. Barnhill, T. B. Slade, Jr., John E. Pope, T. C. Griffin and L. P. Holliday, 1926; (same commissioners were serving in 1928);

J. D. Woolard, Sr., T. C. Griffin, V. G. Taylor, Joshua Coltrain and H. S. Everett, 1930; (same commissioners were re-elected in 1932);

J. E. Pope, R. L:. Perry, Joshua Coltrain, C. C. Fleming and V. G. Taylor, 1934;

J. E. Pope, C. C. Fleming, C. Abram Roberson, R. L. Perry and R. A. Haislip, 1936; (same commissioners re-elected in 1938);

R. L. Perry, C. Abram Roberson, R. A. Haislip, Joshua Coltrain and C. D. Carstarphen, 1940; (same commissioners in 1942);

R. L. Perry, C. Abram Roberson, R. A. Haislip and Joshua Coltrain; C. D. Carstarphen, Jr., did not ask to be qualified and John Henry Edwards was appointed to fill the position); (same board in 1946);

Robert Lee Perry died and W. M. Harrison was appointed to the position on April 1, 1947;

J. H. Edwards, C. Abram Roberson, W. M. Harrison, C. C. Martin and H. S. Johnson, Jr., 1948;

J. H. Edwards, Herbert L. Roebuck, C. C. (Frosty) Martin, Henry S. Johnson, Jr., and J. C. Gurkin, 1952; (same board continued in office until December 1, 1958);

J. H. Edwards, H. S. Johnson, Jr., Paul Barber, J. C. Gurkin and John L. House, 1958;

H. S. Johnson, Jr., Paul Barber, J. C. Gurkin, John L.House and Jos. H. Thigpen, 1960; (same board re-elected in 1962);

Jos. H. Thigpen, J. C. Gurkin, John L. House, Paul Barber and John W. Sledge, 1964; (same board was continued in office in 1966);

J. L. House, J. H. Thigpen, John W. Sledge, Paul Barber and R. C. Malone, 1968; (same board re-elected in 1970);

John W. Sledge resigned and Francis B. Worsley was appointed to the position on May 3, 1971 and Joseph Thigpen resigned and Russell Griffin was appointed to fill the position on June 7, 1971);

John L. House, F. B. Worsley, Paul Barber, Russell Griffin, and A. C. Bailey, 1972; (same board was continued in 1974).

The records indicate that John L. House, present board chairman, and Paul Barber, board member, are beginning their eighth terms this year, a promising record of 18 years, C. Abram Roberson and John Henry Edwards served seven terms, or fourteen years.

The registers of deeds ordinarily served as ex-officio clerks to the commissioners until C. Marion Cobb, county auditor, was named on January 2, 1968, to the position.

COUNTY CORONERS

The Martin County coroner, an important office for many years, is listed officially in this county only from 1884 to the present. The prestige of the office was enhanced by the authority of the coroner to arrest a sheriff.

An incomplete list of coroners has been uncovered in old unofficial records. It has been found that Edward Smithwick served from April, 1774, until January, 1777. The next mention of a coroner in the county was James Ellison who served in 1869-1872 and 1878-1884. It is fairly certain that others served during the 92-year period, but no record of such service has been found. Merick (Myrick?) Gray served from 1873 until 1878. There is no record of a coroner from 1878 to 1884.

Official records list the coroner from 1884 to the present, including T. L. Whitley, 1884-1897; Dr. R. J. Nelson, 1898-1906; Dr. J. H. Saunders, 1907-1914; Dr. H. B. York, 1915-1916; Dr. J. B. H. Knight, 1917-1923. In 1924 coroners were sought outside the medical profession, the undertakers handling the task from 1923 through 1962. The undertaker-coroners were: F. Lee Edwards, 1924-1929; S. Romulus Biggs, Jr., 1930-1950; William Wood Biggs, 1951-1962. Then in 1963 coroners were elected outside the professions and Clarence D. Taylor held the position for several years until the system was changed and Dr. Frank Sheldon was named medical examiner.

SURVEYORS

No records of its early life in the county have been found, but the office of surveyor, first noted on November 17, 1806, had a sporadic existence down through the years, finally disappearing from the scene in 1962.

The office was mainly a titled one, for years carrying much prestige and little or no salary. The first surveyors in the office are believed to have helped establish public land grants made by the State to those who fought in the Revolutionary War and their descendants.

Surveyors were either appointed or gained the office by way of the ballot.

Edmund Smithwick, as far as it can be learned, was the first to hold the office. Serving in 1806, he could have held the office several years. The next mention of a surveyor was in 1869 when J. E. Moore held the office. He served until 1872.

Other surveyors were: C. H. Ange, 1877-1878; J. Robert Mobley, 1884-1891; Sylvester Peel, 1891-1894, 1906-1912 and 1915-1924; T. Jones Taylor, 1901 and 1925-1926; Ephraim Peel, 1913-1914; A. Corey, 1927-1928 and 1940-1946; O. B. Roberson, 1950-1953 and 1957-1962; Marvin Corey, 1954-1956.

MARTIN COUNTY TAX COLLECTORS

Many of the county's public records were destroyed in the 1884 courthouse fire, including apparently those listing the county tax collectors. The justices of the peace probably collected the first county taxes, the task later going to the sheriffs and still later (October, 1941), to appointed collectors outside the sheriff's office.

The first mention of a tax collector is found in a record dated September 13, 1828. As far as it can be learned John L. Hyman was county tax collector on that date. J. L. Shiver was listed as collector on January 30, 1830. No record is found from that date until November 23, 1884, when S. W. Moore was listed as tax collector.

William Jonathan Hardison, sheriff (1874-1896), was appointed in 1884 by the county commissioners to act as tax collector. He was required to post a $10,000 bond. It is apparent that the sheriffs collected taxes from that time until October, 1941. M. Luther Peel, Sr., was appointed tax collector on October 1, 1941, and he served from that time until September 30, 1961 when the present collector, Cecil Brown, was appointed.

It should be remembered that taxes were small in the early years of the county. The main source of income came from property taxes, the state sharing a larger part than the county for years.

ATTORNEYS

Attorneys were few in number in the early days of Martin County, and little can be learned of the few who were practicing here just prior to and after its formation in March, 1774. There was comparatively little crime and there were only a limited number of civil actions in the county during that early period, making a lawyer's service seldom necessary.

While he is never referred to as an attorney, as far as it can be learned, Whitmel Hill could have been the first of the profession in the county. A native of Bertie County, he was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1760 at the age of 17 years. He was married to Winnifred Blount, and it is believed he located in Martin County about that time or soon thereafter on a sizable plantation just this side of the Halifax County line on what is commonly known as the River Road. Apparently he was in this county prior to 1765 or 1770. He was a justice of the Court of Pleas for Martin County, apparently serving in that capacity about the time the county was chartered in March, 1774. Hill also served in various legal capacities for the county and state during the Revolutionary period, attending the Provincial Congress at Halifax in November and December, 1776, and the Continental Congress at Philadelphia in 1778-1781. He also represented Martin in the N. C. General Assembly in 1777-1778. It certainly as indicative that Hill had the qualificiations of a lawyer and that he performed legal duties with or without a legal title.

The first definite mention of an attorney or attorneys in Martin County was made by Asa Biggs in his "Concise History of Martin County". At the October, 1774, term of court in this county Biggs mentions Thomas Jones and Joseph Long as lawyers. Little or nothing is known about the two men.

Biggs then mentions a John Johnston as an attorney at the reorganization of the county court in July, 1777. No other reference is found about John Johnston.

The next reference of an attorney in the county centers around Samuel Johnston, former N. C. Governor (1787). The first United

States Senator from North Carolina, he, a resident of Chowan County, bought seventy acres of land from William KcKenzie and built a home on the Post Road, which ran some distance back of the present office of Dr. A. R. Peele on the Boulevard, calling it his "Little Hermitage". Samuel Johnston practiced law in the county for about ten years before returning to Chowan County. Samuel Johnston is rated as one of the county's most prominent residents during the latter part of the 1790's.

It is certain there were attorneys in the county between 1798 and 1827, but no authentic mention of one can be found for that period of about 30 years.

Martin County was well represented in the North Carolina General Assembly and it is reasonable to assume that many of its representatives in both the Senate and House from 1798 to 1827 were attorneys. On the basis of that assumption the following are listed as probable attorneys in this county during that period, including William Williams, Whitmel Hill, K. McKenzie, Nathan Mayo, Ebenezer Slade, William McKenzie, John Hyman, Jeremiah Slade, John Stewart, James Burroughs, William Darlett, Llewellyn Bowers, Samuel Hyman, John A. Smithwick, and Jos. J. Williams, all in the Senate, and Samuel Smithwick, Samuel Williams, Edmund Smithwick, John Ross, Joseph Bryan, John Mayo, Jesse Cherry, William Griffin, Matthew Yarrell, John Kennedy, G. Sheppard, John Stewart, Jeremiah Slade, John Hyman, William Biggs, Thomas Hyman, William Pierce, Stephen Fagan, Joel Cherry, James Burroughs, James Wiggins, Henry G. Williams, James Sheppard, Andrew Joyner, John Guyther, Gabriel L. Stewart, Darling Cherry, Jos. J. Williams, William Roulhac, Jos. R. Ballard, Alfred M. Slade, Lawrence Cherry, David Latham, all in the House.

Even after 1827 and for two-thirds of a century a complete list of attorneys in this county is not to be found. During the period from 1827 to 1867, names of attorneys in the county were scanned by researchers at Duke and the University of North Carolina libraries in old newspapers and census records.

While apparently incomplete, the following includes names of attorneys who are known to have practiced in this county from 1774 through most of 1974:

1774-1775: Thomas Jones and Joseph Long;
1775: John Johnston;
1793: Samuel Johnston;
1827: Joseph R. Ballard;
1832-1837: Asa Biggs, who got his license in 1831;

1834-1837: William Slade and Matthew Shaw;

1835: E. S. Smithwick;

1836: Bryant Bennett and William W. Cherry;

1834-1837: J. S. Hawks;

1840: Bennett and Hyman;

1848: H. G. Spruill;

1849: Standly;

1850: Joseph Waldo, Joseph Carraway, G. R. Clements, William C. Eborn (who, worth $10,000, was rated second richest man in Martin County at the time,) William J. (Bill John) Ellison, William Mizelle;

1856: W. M. Walker;

1857: Thomas Richardson;

1860: Joseph John Martin, Jesse R. Stubbs, S. W. Watts and William J. Walker, the latter of Hamilton;

1859: Abner S. Williams;

1867: G. N. C. Gregory;

1870: James Edwin Moore, Humble D. Taylor and Sharp Williams;

1872: Joseph M. Sitterson and H. D. Taylor;

1877: Henry P. Pugh;

1880: Dennis Worthington and Wililam Z. Morton. (Morton located in Robersonville in 1894, dying there in 1900);

1882: Harry W. Stubbs;

1886: A. H. Smith;

1890: Wheeler Martin, I;

1897: Benjamin Lightfoot (?) of Jamesville;

1901: George W. Newell;

1905: S. Atwood Newell, Burrous A. Critcher, J. Calvin Smith, of Robersonville;

1907: Francis D. Winston of Windsor and S. Justus Everett maintained offices in Williamston;

1910: A. R. Dunning, after practicing in Robersonville, located in Williamston;

1913: Clayton Moore;

1922: Elbert S. Peel, Sr., Wheeler Martin, II, and Harry Myrt Stubbs;

1929: Hugh G. Horton, Jos. W. Bailey and H. O. Peel;

1930: Robert L. Coburn and W. Hubert Coburn;

1935: Henry M. Hardison and Herbert L. Swain;

1937: Paul D. Roberson, Robersonville;

1937: Carter Studdert came over from Washington and opened a law office in a small room in what is now known as Williamston's professional building the early part of the year. His stay was comparatively short.

1939: Clarence W. Griffin and Don Elphonsa Johnson;

1940: Charles H. Manning;

1942: Robert H. Cowen who later became federal district attorney and who still later went as an attorney to a committee in Washingaton, D.C.;

1947: Edgar Gurganus who passed the bar in 1943, spent four years in the army and returned home in 1947;

1959: William Robt. Peel;

1967: William C. Griffin, Jr., who became district solicitor in 1968 and moved to Superior Court solicitor in 1971;

1968: Daniel A. Manning who passed the bar in 1965 and was in the Federal Bureau of Investigation until he returned home in 1968;

1970: James W. Hardison who passed the bar in 1964 and spent six years in the Federal Bureau of Investigation before returning home and moving into the district solicitor's post;

1971: Milton E. Moore;

1973: Regina Moore of Robersonville who maintains an office in Williamston with her husband, Milton E. Moore; J. Melvin Bowen entered into a law partnership with Edgar J. Gurganus in Williamston;

1974: Charles Dudley Coppage was sworn in by Judge E. S. Peel, Jr., on November 6, 1974, and made ready to enter the military service.

ROBERSONVILLE ATTORNEYS

Robersonville's first attorney was W. Z. Morton, Sr. He moved to Robersonville in 1894 and practiced there until his death in 1900.

Mr. Morton was followed by A. R. Dunning, a native of Aulander where he was born on October 2, 1877. After practicing in Wilmington two years he located in Robersonville, forming a partnership with a Williamston attorney, George Newell, who maintained his offices in the county seat. Mr. Dunning moved to Williamston in 1908 and practiced there until his death in 1932.

J. Calvin Smith, a native of Pitt County, went to Robersonville on December 28, 1898, arriving there at 10:00 a.m., that day, on a freight train with a small wooden trunk. After working as a clerk and selling insurance for about nine years, he attended Wake Forest College in 1907 and was licensed to practice law. He maintained law offices in Robersonville until his death.

B. Duke Critcher, a native of Nash (?) County, practiced law with his brother, B. A. Critcher, for about a year before locating in Robersonville where he practiced the law profession until he entered the ministry.

Born in Robersonville on May 5, 1911, Paul D. Roberson was Robersonville's next lawyer. He passed the State Bar in 1936, and worked in the office of Hugh G. Horton, Williamston attorney, until opening an office in his home town in 1937.

Another native of the Robersonville area to practice law there was Ned P. Everett who was in partnership with Attorney Hugh G. Horton in Williamston from 1951 until 1954. After continuing his practice in Robersonville until 1961 he located in Washington, D.C., working as a member of the late Congressman Herbert Bonner's staff. He continued in the nation's capital after the congressman's death.

Still another native, Milton E. Moore, began his practice in Robersonville in September, 1971. His wife entered N. C. Central University School of Law in 1972 and was licensed in 1974. The attorneys also maintain offices in Williamston.

The attorneys in this county have been listed as far as possible when they entered practice. Several of them practiced long terms, including Joseph Waldo of Hamilton and Harry Stubbs. Elbert S. Peel, Sr., possibly had the longest tenure, practicing from 1922 until his death in 1976.

CHAPTER VII

COUNTY POLITICS

Holding their largest convention since 1898, Martin Democrats, some 1,500 strong, nominated their candidates for office at a meeting in Wililamston on September 4, 1912.

Out of a four-man field—Justus Everett, Clayton Moore, A. Corey and A. R. Dunning—the convention nominated Dunning for county representative in the N. C. General Assembly. J. C. Crawford won over H. T. Roberson, Jr., for sheriff. Crawford had served fourteen consecutive years in that office. S. S. Brown was renominated on the fourth ballot over Sylvester Peel, E. B. Darden, D. J. Meeks, K. B. Crawford and H. M. Burras for register of deeds. Treasurer C. D. Carstarphen, Sr., was renominated without opposition, along with Dr. J. H. Saunders, coroner, and Ephraim Peel was nominated for county surveyor. Chosen for county commissioners were: W. M. Perry, B. S. Cowin, V. R. Taylor, J. L. Croom and Dr. B. L. Long.

(County Democratic Convention—Enterprise, Oct. 2. 1908)

The Martin County Democrats held a big convention in Williamston in September, 1908, one report stating that the electors from Goose Nest and Robersonville townships filled one long train.

Prohibition was a hot subject in the campaign, and when the issue came to a vote, Martin was one of 17 in the state to vote against it.

J. Cornelius Crawford won the nomination for sheriff over W. A. James and J. S. Peel.

Simon Edwin Hardison of Williams, W. H. Daniel of Griffins, J. G. Godard of Williamston, J. A. Bennett of Goose Nest and A. S. Roberson of Robersonville were nominated for county commissioners.

A. S. Coffield was nominated on the second ballot for register of deeds over W. C. Manning, A. S. Coffield, L. B. Wynn and Joseph L. Holliday. Manning, the incumbent, had served in the position for ten years.

The following nominations were by acclamation: W. H. Stubbs, representative; Dr. Jos. H. Saunders, coroner; C. D. Carstarphen. treasurer; and Sylvester Peel, surveyor.

Wheeler Martin, Sr., prominent Republican in this section of the State, was slated to succeed E. C. Duncan as collector of Internal Revenue for the Eastern District of North Carolina in January, 1908.

The Democrats held a county convention in the Martin County courthouse on Thursday, August 13, 1914, to canvass the elction returns of August 6. B. F. Godwin was made chairman and P. F. Davenport, secretary of the convention.

The vote was: A. R. Dunning for State House of Representatives, 380; R. J. Peel for clerk of court, 387; J. C. Crawford for sheriff, 423; C. D. Carstarphen, Sr., for treasurer, 421; S. S. Brown for register of deeds, 417; Dr. H. B. York for coroner, 399; those nominated for board of commissioners were, Luther Hardison, Benj. Mc. Manning, V. R. Taylor, J. L. Croom and Dr. B. L. Long.

(Enterprise, Aug. 14, 1914)

The first Martin County Democratic primary was held on August 6, 1914. Ballot boxes were stationed in the various precincts.

Prior to that time, conventions were held in Williamston for the nomination of the Democratic candidates. The voters, after hearing the nomination speeches, would then line up in rows of fours under their candidate's banner.

(Enterprise, July 24, 1914)

In addition to Senator Harry W. Stubbs and Representative A. R. Dunning, Martin County was well represented in the 1915 N. C. General Assembly.

H. M. Burras, Sr., was calendar clerk. Miss Irene Smith (Barnes) was a stenographer to the Senate, and Young Clyde Anderson served as a page.

(Enterprise, January 15, 1915)

The age-old boundary line dispute between Beaufort and Martin counties appeared for a settlement on February 4, 1924, when the Martin commissioners named Sylvester Peel to work with the Beaufort surveyor and establish a true line. Beaufort was claiming a sizable portion of this county. The line was established and Beaufort received nothing. The dispute could have been the work of Beaufort attorneys, seeking legal fees.

(Enterprise, February 5, 1924)

The fee system was discontinued and all county officers were placed on straight salaries by the Martin Board of Commissioners in March, 1926, the change becoming effective the following December.

Salaries were adopted: Treasurer, $1,200; sheriff, $6,000; clerk of court, $3,000; register of deeds, $3,000, plus $1,200 for clerical help.

(Enterprise, March 5, 1926).

For the first time in known history, and something which has not happened since, Martin County office holders voluntarily accepted reductions in salaries on February 2, 1931. The decreases ranged up to ten percent. Depression gripped the economy, and the county treasurer could hardly meet the obligations during the period. - Delinquent tax accounts, numbering in the eight or nine hundreds, amounted to almost half the total levy during some of the years in the early thirties.

(Enterprise, Janury 3, 1931.)

The economic depression reached into the halls of the North Carolina General Assembly in March, 1931, and the counties were called upon to help defray expenses of those who were making financial sacrifices to remain at their posts. The small sum of $100 per man was suggested.

(Enterprise, March 20, 1931)

CHAPTER VIII

NATIONAL OFFICE HOLDERS

Martin County Men in Congress

Martin County, directly or indirectly, has had seven men in the Continental Congress, Philadelphia, and the U. S. Senate and the National House of Reprsentatives, Washington. However, only two of the number were natives who lived in the county at the time of their elections.

Whitmel Hill, a native of Bertie but a resident of Martin County when elected, was in the Continental Congress at Philadelphia from 1778 to 1782. However, Hill was listed in the 1874 N. C. Manual as a state senator from Martin County during the years of 1778-1780. Hill could have served in the State Senate and also the Continental Congress. It is not likely Hill served in both the N. C. Assembly and the Continental Congress at the same time. In a letter, dated 1779, to Hon. Thomas Burke, Hill said: "Being at home eight days, my duty had me to wait on our Assembly. They met at Smithfield, a rascally hole for such business..."

However, there is much evidence that the N. C. Manual listings are in error. The State Records for 1779 show Hill reported to the Assembly that year. Hill also said in his letter to Dr. Thomas Burke that the trip from Philadelphia to his home required seven and one-half days, that he traveled as many as 65 miles in one day.

Samuel Johnston, N. C. governor in 1787-1780, was a Federalist in the U. S. Senate from 1789 to 1793. A native of Scotland, Johnston lived in Edenton most of his life. In 1793, he came to Williamston where he made his home between five and eight years on the old Post Road. several hundred yards back of Dr. Rudolph Peel's office on the Boulevard.

While his address at the time is not definite, Thomas Hill Williams, a prominent name in the county at the time, served in the United States Senate from 1817 until 1829.

Asa Biggs, a county native and Williamston resident until after the Civil War, served in both the U. S. Senate and National House of Representatives. He first served in the House from 1845 until 1847, and in the Senate from 1855 until 1858. Biggs also served as both a Federal and Confederate judge. Judge Biggs would not subscribe to the Federal oath after the Civil War, and it was said he was disbarred, finally accepting work in a commission house with a relative in Norfolk where he died and was buried.

Henry H. Bryan, also a native of this county, removed to Tennessee when a lad. He was sent to the National House by the people there for the 1819 and 1821 terms.

While there is some doubt about his birthplace, Vannoy Hartrog Manning is believed to have been born in Martin County in July, 1839, moving with his parents to Mississippi in 1841. He served in the National House of Representatives from 1877 until 1883. The Biographic Directory of the American Congress says Manning was born in Wake County. However, L. L. Polk in his "Handbook of North Carolina", Raleigh, 1879, says on page 112 that Manning was born in Martin County and moved with his parents to Mississippi in 1841, and was elected to Congress there.

Joseph John Martin, a native of the county and also a local resident when he was elected, served in the National House of Representatives from 1879 until 1881.

It has been 93 years since Martin County had a native and resident in the National House of Representatives, and 116 years since it had a bonafide son in the U. S. Senate.

"Henry H. Bryan, a Representative from Tennessee; born in Martin County, N. C. attended grammar and high school; moved to Tennessee and held several local offices; elected to the Sixteenth Congress (March 4, 1819-March 3, 1821); had been reelected to the Seventeenth Congress, but did not qualify; died in Montgomery County, Tenn., May 7, 1835."—Biographical Directory of the American Congress, page 657.

Little can be learned about Bryan but old records show he was commissioned a captain of the 24th Regiment, (Montgomery County) Tennessee Militia on May 21, 1808, and promoted to 1st major on December 29, 1808.

"Asa Biggs, a Representative and a Senator from North Carolina; born in Williamston, Martin County, N. C., February 4, 1811; attended the common (private?) schools pursued classical studies; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1831 and commenced practice in Williamston, N. C.; member of the State constitutional convention in 1835; member of the State house of commons in 1840 and 1842; served in the State senate in 1844 and 1854; elected as a Democrat to the Twenty-ninth Congress (March 4, 1845-March 3, 1847); unsuccessful candidate for reelection in 1846 to the Thirtieth Congress; one of a commission to codify the State laws of North Carolina in 1851; elected to the United States Senate and served from March 4, 1855, until May 5, 1958, when he resigned, having been appointed United States judge of the district of North Carolina by President Buchanan; served as judge of the district court until 1861; member of the secession convention of North Carolina in 1861; Confederate States judge 1861-1865; resumed the practice of law in Tarboro, Edgecombe County, N. C., in 1865; moved to Norfolk, Va., in 1869 and continued the practice of law until his death in that city March 6, 1878; interment in Elmwood Cemetery."

His Williamston law office was located on northwest corner of Church and Smithwick streets, and was torn down to make way for a two-story brick residence. It is said that Asa Biggs was forced to leave the law profession when he would not subscribe to the oath of allegiance, and that he worked in a wholesale grocery firm with a relative in Norfolk.

Col. Asa Biggs of Martin County was elected to the United States Senate by the N. C. Legislature on November 28, 1854.

(Enterprise, May 14, 1920)

"Vannoy Hartrog Manning, a Representative from Mississippi; born near Raleigh, Wake County, N. C. (?), July 26, 1839; moved with his parents to Mississippi in 1841; attended Horn Lake Male Academy, De Soto County, Miss., and the University of Nashville, Tennessee; moved to Arkansas in 1860; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1861 and commenced practice in Hamburg, Ark.; during the Civil War served in the Confederate army as a captain and subsequently as colonel of the Third Arkansas Infantry and Second Arkansas Battalion; captured at the Battle of the Wilderness and held as a prisoner of war until August, 1865; after the war resumed the practice of law in Holly Springs, Miss.; elected as a Democrat to the Forty-fifth, Forty-sixth, and Forty-seventh Congress (March 4, 1877-March 3, 1883); presented credentials as a Member-elect to the Forty-eighth Congress but did not qualify, and on June 24, 1884, the seat was awarded to James R. Chalmers, who contested his election; resumed the practice of law in Washington, D.C., in 1883; died in Branchville, Prince Georges County, Md., November 3, 1892; interment in Glenwood Cemetery, Washington, D.C."

The above sketch, appearing in the "Biographical Directory of the American Congress", page 1334, varies from a listing found in L. L. Polk's "Handbook of North Carolina," Raleigh, 1879. Polk, on page 112 of the publication says Manning was born in Martin County and moved to Mississippi in 1841, and was elected to Congress there.

Joseph John Martin, a Representative from North Carolina; born in Williamston, Martin County, N. C., November 21, 1833; attended Williamston Academy; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1859 and practiced; prosecuting attorney of Martin County, N. C.; elected solicitor for the second judicial district of North Carolina in 1868; reelected in 1874, and served in this capacity until his nomination for Congress in 1878, when he resigned; delegate to the Republican National Convention at Cincinnati in 1876; presented credentials as a Republican Member-elect to the Forty-sixth Congress and served from March 4, 1879, until January 29, 1881, when he was succeeded by Jesse J. Yeates, who contested the election; resumed the practice of law in Tarboro, Edgecombe County, N. C.; postmaster of Tarboro from 1897 until his death in that city on December 18, 1900; interment in Williamston Cemetery, Wililamston, N. C."—Biographical Directory of the American Congress, page 1344.

Samuel Johnston, a native of Scotland and one-time resident of Williamston, figured prominently in politics during the Colonial days and Revolutionary period. The following is a biographical sketch of the patriot as it appeared in the Biographical Directory of the American Congress, page 1200:

"Samuel Johnston, a delegate and a seantor from North Carolina; born in Dundee, Scotland, December 15, 1733; immigrated to the United States in 1736 with his parents, who settled in Chowan County, N. C.; attended school in New England; studied law; was admitted to the bar and practiced; member of the State assembly in 1760; provincial treasurer of the northern division; moderator of the Revolutionary convention in 1775; member of the State senate in 1779; Member of the Continental Congress 1780-1782 and elected first president after the Articles of Confederation were signed, but declined to serve; presided over the State conventions of 1788 and 1789; elected as a Federalist to the United States Senate and served from November 27, 1789, to March 3, 1793; judge of the superior court of North Carolina 1800-1803; died near Edenton, Chowan County, N. C., August 18, 1816; interment in the Johnston Burial Ground on the Hayes plantation, near Edenton, N. C."

"Thomas Hill Williams, a Senator from Mississippi; born in North Carolina in 1780; completed preparatory studies; studied law; was admitted to the bar and practiced; register of the land office for the Territory of Mississippi in 1805; appointed secretary of the Territory June 1, 1805; Acting Governor from April 22 to June 3, 1806, when he resigned as secretary; reappointed secretary June 1, 1807; again Acting Governor from March to June 1, 1807; collector of customs at New Orleans in 1810; delegate to the State constitutional convention; upon the admission of Mississippi as a state into the Union was elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate; reelected in 1823 and served from December 10, 1817, to March 3, 1829; moved to Tennessee, where he died, in Robertson County, in 1840."—"Biographical Directory of the American Congress", page 1931.

Senator Williams's birth place is not definite, but the Williams and Hill families were prominent in Martin County at the time, and it is likely that he was a native of the Hamilton-Palmyra area.

CHAPTER IX

PROMINENT MEN

Contrary to general belief, Martin County has produced a goodly number of prominent men, especially in the field of leadership as it pertains to legislation, religion, education, progress and even war. Quite a few of those leaders figured prominently in the early history, not only of the county but also in that of the region and nation.

It is impossible to mention all of them or to detail the parts they assumed in history. The review is centered mainly in the formative years of the county, for the men of that period prepared a solid foundation for the progress and general advancement that were to come in succeeding years.

It is interesting to note that most of the prominent figures associated with the early county history were men of education, culture and limited financial worth, supported by strong religious beliefs and convictions. And they had the confidence of the common man, the two groups forming a partnership that brought credit and recognition to the county down through the years.

Based on hardships and fraught by disappointment at times, the leadership of such men as the Smithwicks and ever so many others built bridges, carved paths and roads out of the wilderness, formed the plantations and started the family community life. Religion had a place in the system, but education was limited and modern life was more than a century and a half away.

The early settlers operated, more or less, on an individual or small group basis. It was not until about the revolutionary period that organized leadership, admittedly a bit loosely at first, began to assert itself.

Discussing a potential list of the county's most prominent men, the late Warren H. Biggs, a noted county historian, was of the opinion that Whitmel Hill possibly held a commanding or top position.

Dr. James R. Young, who did some early research for this history while he was at Chapel Hill, prepared the following sketch on Hill:

Whitmel Hill was born into a wealthy family, John and Martha Whitmel Bate Hill, in Bertie County, North Carolina, February 12, 1743. Little is known of his early life or when he moved to what is now Martin County. He was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1760. Hill married Winifred Blount, great-grandaughter of James Blount of Chowan County, and they had four children, two of whom, Joseph and John, died in early age. Their other son was Thomas Blount, their daughter, Elizabeth. The extent of Hill's landholdings is not known though his estate, "Palmyra", at Hill's Ferry, was undoubtedly large. In the census of 1790 his 140 slaves were the largest number held by anyone in Martin County.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, Hill, already a justice of the peace, was elected lieutenant colonel of the Martin County Militia. He was second in command to William Williams, for whom Williamston was named. Hill remained lieutenant colonel from September, 1775, to April, 1778, when William's "informants" forced his resignation and placed Hill as colonel of the regiment. Previously he had held several important positions in Revolutionary government. In August, 1775, Hill was elected to the Assembly which met at Hillsboro and established the Provisional Government in the "absence" of the last royal governor of North Carolina, Josiah Martin. In April, 1776, Hill was a delegate at Halifax where the Provisional Government changed its name to the Council of Safety and declared its independence from England. When the next congress assembled in Halifax in November, 1778, and established the State Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Hill was once again a member. When North Carolina's first General Assembly met in 1777, Hill was there as a representative from Martin County. At the following session of the General Assembly in New Bern in April, 1778, Hill, now a senator, was elected speaker of the Senate.

In July of 1777, Hill had uncovered a Tory plot "to assassinate all leading men" of the Revolution in North Carolina on "some certain night." As a result of this information Governor Richard Caswell was able to circumvent the plans of the "traitors", most of whom were arrested. Shortly before Hill's discovery of the Tory conspiracy his name had been placed in nomination as a delegate to the Continental Congress, a position won by Cornelius Hamnett. Nevertheless, he was named as a delegate to the Congress meeting in Philadelphia shortly after he was chosen speaker of the Senate. Hill served there from 1778 to 1781.

In a letter to Dr. Thomas Burke, his room-mate, fellow delegate to the Continental Congress, and future governor of North Carolina, Hill wrote that he had made the 350 mile journey to Philadelphia in only seven and one-half days, "a ride scarcely performed before in so short a time." With apparent pride Hill later wrote that he had covered 65 miles in one day! In another letter from Philadelphia Hill's irritation with South Carolina's refusal to accept the paper money of North Carolina troops serving in the Palmetto State or to adequately provide for the Tar Heels was clearly expressed. "Our distrest militia," he wrote, "have been obliged to rescue that country from the dominion of Britain" and have met with constant affronts. I hope they will therefore "claim to themselves some compensation for their services, which compensation they will seize and bring home to their ruined families.'

Hill and Dr. Burke received special recognition for their work at Philadelphia from the North Carolina General Assembly in October, 1779, for "their able, faithful and diligent and public spirited services." Hill was then appointed to the prestigious Council of State. In 1783 he was elected senator from Martin County and, in 1787 and 1788, he was reappointed to the Council of State. In the latter part of 1788 Hill was reelected to the Senate and in 1789 was appointed to the State Commission on Indian Affairs and Public Revenue and to the committee on Propositions and Grievances. These were the last public offices he was to hold.

Meanwhile, Hill had spent considerable effort attempting to develop Martin County and in 1785 he successfully petitioned the State to incorporate a town on the Roanoke River on property which he donated "to promote the trade and navigation of the said river." No trace now exists of this town, Blountsville, though it was probably located to the northwest of Williamston. Hill also encouraged the building of a canal to open the Albemarle Sound to the Atlantic near Roanoke Island. Nothing else is known of his life and he died on his plantation and was buried at Walnut Hill on September 12, 1797.

His body in 1887 was reintered in Trinity Cemetery, near Scotland Neck.

John Hill Wheeler, in his "Historical Sketches of North Carolina", said, in part:

"He (Whitmel Hill) early entered with great earnestness into the dubious and dangerous conflict between England and America, and threw into the scale of liberty his 'life, his fortune and his sacred honor'."

Thomas B. Hill left a large family. Elizabeth, daughter of Whitmel and Winifred Blount Hill, married John Anthony, of Philadelphia, from whom a large family sprang.

There's mention of Whitmel Hill in directories, biographies, political records and other journals. Some of his letters were published in Chapel Hill in 1861.

Not too much can be learned about Thomas Hunter, but he figured in both Colonial and State government, and then the town of Williamston was established on his lands.

The first mention of a Thomas Hunter is found in Colonial and State Records, volume 22, page 400. He was chosen chairman of a committee of claims at a meeting held in Edenton on March 4, 1740. On November 20, 1776, Thomas Hunter was certified along with William Williams, Whitmill Hill, John Hardison and Samuel Smithwick, as a representative to the Provincial Congress (State General Assembly) for Martin County. Hunter was also a member of a convention held in Hillsborough on July 25, 1788. The convention was called "for the purposes of deliberating and determining on the proposed plan of Federal Government, and for fixing the unalterable seat of government of this state." Hunter voted in the negative. He served several terms as a justice of the peace in this county and was a member of the Council of War to Governor Abner Nash on November 4, 1780.

Col. William Williams

The town of Williamston, known as Skewarkee from the time of the Indians, was laid out on 78 acres of land belonging to Thomas Hunter and was incorporated at the second session of the General Assembly held in Smithfield, Johnston County, on the 18th of October, 1779. In honor of Col. William Williams, a name very prominent in this section, it was incorporated as Williamstown, later changed to Williamston.

Of English descent, his father, William Williams, Sr., migrated to this country from Wales, England, in the early 1700's and settled on the Roanoke River in the upper part of Martin County which at that time was Edgecombe and later Halifax. The elder Williams married Elizabeth Alston, also of Halifax County, and to this union were born four children of whom Col. Williams was the fourth.

Col. Williams married Elizabeth Whitmell, and they had three children, the first being Samuel Williams who married Charity Alston Dawson; a second son, Gen. William Williams, was married twice, the first time to Miss Smith and the last time to Elizabeth Williams, descendants of whom are now living in Warren and Halifax counties. The third child was a daughter, also named Elizabeth Williams, who married John Johnston a brother of N. C.'s first U. S. Senator, Samuel Johnston.

Col. Williams' brother, Samuel Williams, lived to old age without having married. A second brother, Joseph John Williams, married an Alston and reared quite a large family. A third brother, Solomon Williams, married Temple Boddie to whom was born a large family.

After the formation of Martin County in 1774,, Col. Williams entered with great earnestness into the dangerous conflict between Great

Britain and America, and gave his fortune as well as his time to the winning of that struggle. As a participant in public affairs, he was a delegate from Martin to the Hillsboro Convention and to the State Congress at Halifax in 1776. At the organization of a State militia he was elected colonel of the Martin County unit. He served as such until he was elected the county's first State senator in 1777, and was succeeded by his nephew, Lt. Col. Whitmell Hill.

At the conclusion of the war, Col. Williams devoted himself to his vast interests in the county along the upper Roanoke until death claimed him. It is thought that he is buried in the upper part of the county.

Other members of his family who have been prominent in the activities, of the state have been Whitmell Hill, delegate to the Continental Congress; Gabriel Johnston, colonial governor of N. C.; Willis Alston; and Samuel Johnston, Governor and first U. S. Senator from N. C.

Among Martin County citizens attaining recognition in high places was Samuel Johnston who lived at his "Little Hermitage" in Williamston about ten years.

Born in Dundee, Scotland, on January 26, 1733, he came to this country with his parents in 1736, locating in Chowan County. Johnston served as a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1780-1782, and was governor of this State on November 12, 1787. He was re-elected in 1788. Nominated in 1789, Johnston resigned to go to Washington, D. C. as a U. S. Senator. After serving in the U. S. Senate Johnston from November 26, 1789, to March 3, 1793, returned to the State and located on 70 acres of land purchased from William McKenzie. The land was on the old Post Road leading from Sweet Water Creek into Williamston at a point just back of Dr. A. R. Peele on present 13 and 17 highways.

Coming to Williamston early in 1793, Johnston was instrumental in having a post office established in Williamston on March 4, that year. Johnston was on the State Superior Court bench from 1800 to 1803.

It is known officially that Johnston served in the Colonial State Assembly in 1760 and in the N. C. Senate in 1779. He is not officially listed among the members of the N. C. General Assembly in 1798, but in correspondence with James Iredell, who married Johnston's sister, Hannah, Johnston refers to his activities in the N. C. General Assembly. The former Williamston resident also held other governmental posts and was active in various civic and community affairs.

Johnston apparently retired from active politics about 1803 and returned to his old home near Edenton, dying there on August 18, 1816. He was buried on Hayes Plantation.

Other than that they figured prominently in political affairs and patriotic activities, little is known about the Blake Bakers, one and two. Who they were and where they came from are not known. It is assumed that the second Blake Baker is a son of the first. Apparently another member of the same family, Blake Baker Wiggins, also figured prominently in much of the early history of the county and section.

It is not certain if the first Blake Baker resided in that portion of Halifax now known as Martin. The late Warren H. Biggs said that Blake Baker lived in Martin County a short distance this side of the town of Palmyra. The first Blake Baker could have lived in Halifax and the second one could have lived in what is now known as Martin.

The first Blake Baker was a member of the N. C. General Assembly as early as 1760. He served on many commissions and apparently was a large land owner. The last mention found about the first Blake Baker is found in the Colonial Records, volume VIII, page 109. The following petition, was addressed to William Tryon, Esq., captain, general, governor, etc., apparently by John Harvey, speaker:

"This House, having been informed that Mr. Blake Baker who was elected one of the members for Halifax County is dead, therefore desires your excellency will be pleased to direct a writ for the clerk of the Crown to issue a writ for electing a member for the said county of Halifax to sit and vote in this present assembly."

The petition was dated October 25, 1769.

The second Blake Baker married Sallie Lee Wiggins in 1776. He was born in 1746. "History of Edgecombe County" says Blake Baker, the second, was a noted Revolutionary War patriot and once attorney general of North Carolina, was a recognized supporter in the awakening of the Epioscopal Church in this (Edgecombe) County and area after the war, possibly as late as 1794. In addition to other duties, he served as a notary public for the District of Edenton on July 17, 1786. Biggs maintains that the town of Oak City was erected on the lands of the Blake Bakers.

Nathan Mayo holds a high rank among the pioneers in Martin-Edgecombe counties, figuring prominently in politics and religion during the last quarter of the 18th century.

He was born in Edgecombe County, apparently a part of Martin when it was established in 1774. The dividing lines between the counties of Edgecombe, Martin and Pitt were changed, and apparently the old gentleman lived his declining years in Edgecombe along the Martin line.

Mayo represented Martin County in the State House in 1778 and 1784, and was the county's senator in 1786-1791. The records show he was in the State Senate from Edgecombe in 1796 and 1797. On December 20, 1787, the N. C. General Assembly nominated Revolutionary War field officers for Martin County, including Nathan Mayo, lieutenant colonel commander; John Ballard, lieutenant colonel; James Ballard, first major; and Benjamin Wheatley (Whitley) second major.

Mayo almost single-handedly suppressed the Tory rebellion led by Capt. John Llewellyn in Martin County. Llewellyn was later tried and convicted in Edenton, and was sentenced to hang. Mayo was one of the petitioners to spare the Tory's life.

Elder Joseph Biggs in his "History of the Kehukee Association" said in 1834:

"Nathan Mayo was born, according to record, on September 22, 1742. Many of the occurrences of his life have not been handed down to us, but some are known from personal acquaintance. When the time arrived which 'tried men's souls' in the Revolutionary struggle he took an active part in contending for the rights of the colonies. He became an object of some solicitude to several of those favoring the oppressions of the day, and a plan was in agitation to remove him out of the way by putting an end to his existence. But he was appraised by some of his religious friends of the secret schemes of his enemies, and thereby their plans were frustrated. He was often called on and readily obeyed in administering the laws of his State and collecting its feeble defense against the enemies of his country. He judiciously served the people as a magistrate in the administration of justice and afterwards as the representative of his county in the General Assembly of the State. In a military capacity he served as a captain, major and commanding colonel of his country. He was not much or often out of his native county in publicly defending the rights of himself and his fellowmen, but sufficient to prove with what alacrity he was willing to encounter danger for them. About the beginning of the Revolutionary struggle he embraced religion, not from sinister views but from the honest dictates of his judgment, and attached himself to a Baptist church on Tosinot (swamp), Edgecombe County, which church then had a branch at Flat Swamp, Pitt County. That branch increasing somewhat, they petitioned the church for dismission to form a constitution, which was granted. He was one of her constituent members. He took an active part in attending to her interests, was a very correct disciplinarian, and was often called on to officiate as moderator in the Kehukee Association. When the church at Cross Roads (Edgecombe County) was constituted he took a letter of dismission and became a member there, as it was more convenient for him. He served much in each church as deacon, and as long as his mental faculties were retained, the subject of religion was the burden of his song.

"Although he did not often appear in the pulpit or stage to address fellowmen on the all important subject of a preparation for a future state, yet at times he would perform this act of love in a feeling manner. At last through age and infirmity he had to give over these public pursuits, and on March 14, 1811, he departed this life beloved by many. His death was regretted by all his numerous relatives and friends, and we doubt not has taken up his abode 'where the wicked cease from their troubling, and the weary are at rest'."

The colonel was married twice, and had six children, four by his first wife, Julia, and two by his second wife, Elizabeth Hyman.

William Ross of Martin County was the son of William Ross, Sr., formerly of the State of Virginia, who came to North Carolina, and settled in Martin County (the islands section of what is now known as Williams Township). His son (William, Jr.,) father of ten children listed below, was born on the 9th of August, 1731, and departed this life on December 25, 1801.

The names and birth dates of William Ross, Junior's children are: John, September 3, 1757; William, January 17, 1760; Martin, November 27, 1762; Winifred, March 9, 1765; Nannie, March 26, 1767; James, March 19, 1769; Mary, February 11, 1771; Nathan, November 2, 1773; Reuben, May 9, 1776; and Elizabeth, May 3, 1779.

The maiden name of the wife of William Ross, Jr., was Mary Griffin of Martin County.

No doubt there were quite a few others who preceded the Ross family in Martin County, but the birth dates of William Ross, Jr., and his children are among the first, if not officially, that were reliably recorded.

Three of the sons, Martin, James and Reuben, were prominent ministers in the Primitive Baptist Church, all three later switching to the Missionary Baptist Church where they continued prominent ministries in this state, Tennessee and Kentucky.

Three of the Ross brothers were said to have fought in the Revolutionary war, and three, Martin, James and Reuben, were prominent in the religious field. The Ross brothers were the forerunners in advancing the Missionary Baptist Church in North Carolina. The authors of Hassells' "Church History", state that the missionary movement was started by Elder Martin Ross when he preached in Conoho Log Chapel, not far from Oak City in 1803. Ross was a leader in the movement to start the N. C. Baptist Convention in a meeting held in Greenville.

Reuben Ross was one of the early merchants in Williamston, and pastored Skewarkey Primitive Baptist Church a few years in the early part of the 1800s. He was married to Milly or Mildred Yarrell, daughter of Matthew Yarrell and his wife, Mary Wheatly (Whitley) Yarrell. Mary Wheatly Yarrell was a relative of Dr. James Wheatley, one among the first citizens of the county.

Elder Reuben Ross was ordained a minister in the Primitive Baptist Church in the early part of 1807 by Elders Joseph Biggs, Luke Ward and his brother, James Ross. Experiencing difficulties in his mercantile venture, Reuben Ross left Wililamston on May 6, 1807. It was the last night in the county for the elder's family with a relative, Charles Cherry, the husband of Mildred Yarrell Ross's sister, Rosa Yarrell Cherry. They spent the night, with others making the journey to Cumberland, Tenn., near a deserted Episcopal Church, about three miles from Williamston on Highway 125 and on the Slade-Blount farm.

Martin Ross' detailed biography appears in "Dictionary of American Biography", volume XVI, pages 130 and 181.

He pastored Skewarkey Church from its establishment until 1793 when he went to Yeopin Primitive Church in Chowan Association.

Among the most prominent men in Martin County history were the Biggses, especially Asa, Joseph, Jr., and Joseph D. Biggs.

Written in the annals of state and national legislation and in the constitutional frame of North Carolina, the record of the late Judge Asa Biggs is something to be cherished by all men.

Asa Biggs, son of the Elder Joseph Biggs and wife, Chloe Daniel, of Smithwick Creek, was born on Williamston's East Main Street, near the brink of the river hill, on February 4, 1811. His father, a prominent Primitive Baptist minister in the early period of that denomination in this section, moved his family to Williamston in 1810 from the old Biggs home located on the large farm now owned and operated by J. Edward Corey on the Washington road, near Williamston.

The young boy who was later to advance to high public positions in State and Nation attended the old Williamston Academy which was co-founded by his father. Largely through the efforts of stern but yet thoughtful parents, Asa Biggs received a liberal education without attendance upon any foreign school or university. At the age of 20 years, he was admitted to the Martin County bar, the event marking the beginning of a colorful career in the courthouses over a wide territory as a lawyer and later as a Federal jurist and still later as a Confederate judge.

His first public service was rendered the State in 1835 where he served as a member of the N. C. Constitutional Convention. Mr. Biggs, then just a young man, was associated with Jesse Cooper, of Hamilton, in the convention. He later served as a member of the State Constitutional convention, in 1865. D. W. Bagley, of Williamston, was also a member of that convention. In 1840, Mr. Biggs was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives from this county and succeeded himself in that position two years later. In 1844 he was a member of the State senate.

His rise in public life was rapid during that period, and in 1845 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives. Five years later his legal ability was recognized when Governor Reed appointed him along with Romulus M. Saunders and B. F. Moore to revise the North Carolina Statutes. He returned to the State Senate in 1854 and a year later he resigned to accept the office of United States Senator from North Carolina. He served in that position three years or until he was appointed Federal judge of the North Carolina district by President James Buchanan.

At the oubreak of the War Between the States, he resigned his judgeship in April, 1861. Hardly had he surrendered his commission to President Abraham Lincoln than he was appointed Confederate judge by Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America. He served the entire state in that capacity until the overthrow of the Confederacy.

Called to apologize by State authorities who were adverse to the will of the humbled people, Judge Biggs refused to recognize the summons and surrendered his right to practice law in this State. He went to Norfolk and formed a partnership with his brother in the brockerage business, carrying on at the same time an extensive law practice in Virginia. His last years in Norfolk were triumphal ones and his death there on March 6, 1878, was mourned in the press of several states. He was buried in Norfolk.

Judge Biggs married Miss Martha E. Andrews, of Bertie County, and was the father of a large family, authentic reports stating that their son, Henry Andrews Biggs, was the last man killed in the Civil War.

Writing the judge's obituary in the Skewarkey minutes, Elder C. B. Hassell said, in part, on May 10, 1878:

"Meetings of the members of the Cotton Exchange of Norfolk and

Suffolk, and also the members of the Bar of those cities were called upon the announcement of his death. Highly complimentary resolutions to his widow were passed by both. They agreed to attend the funeral in a body and wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days. The doors of the Cotton Exchange were closed for the funeral. Elder James S. Woodard of Wilson, N. C., preached on the occasion to a large, intelligent and sympathizing congregation.

"The members of the Bar in the county of Martin, where he had so long practiced his profession, held meetings and passed resolutions honorable to his good name and fame and consolatory to his bereaved family."

Martin County's first Biggs, Joseph, is believed to have come to the area from Virginia about 1742, locating about two miles from Williamston on Highway 17, south. The late Warren H. Biggs said that Joseph, the first, held a land grant for the territory from the present Sunny Side oyster bar to old Mill Inn and from Sweet Water Creek to a point almost half way to Bear Grass.

Little is known about the first Joseph Biggs other than he was married to Marguerite Eastwood. The name came into prominence in this county when Joseph Biggs, II, was born Novemer 12, 1766. Joseph, II, first married Elizabeth Gregory of Camden County, and they had two children, Polly and Peggy. Mrs. Biggs died on October 9, 1786. He married on February 4, 1787, Ann Phillips of Beaufort County and they had eight children. She died in October, 1807, and on February 4, 1808, he married Chloe Daniel of the Smithwick Creek area, Martin County. Six children were born to the union, including Joseph D., Asa and Kader, and a daughter, Louisa.

Joseph Biggs, II, was baptised at Skewarkey on August 9, 1775, by Elder Martin Ross. He was ordained in February, 1796, and took over the pastoral care of Flat Swamp Church. In 1806 he took over the pastoral care of Skewarkey, serving that church until his death on May 31, 1844, a tenure of about 38 years.

Elder Biggs was prominent in religious affairs throughout the region, serving the Kehukee Association as assistant and clerk for 38 years. He also engaged in the mercantile business with his son, Joseph D. in Williamston. Possibly his greatest and lasting achievement was his "History of the Kehukee Association", covering the period from 1803 to 1833. The history was published in 1834 by the Tarboro Press, and only a few copies are known to be in existence today.

It is said that 120 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren attended the elder's funeral.

Joseph Daniel Biggs was active in religious affairs in this county and section for about 63 years. Son of Joseph Biggs, II, and Chloe Daniel Biggs, he was born near Williamston on November 29, 1809, and died on May 18, 1889. His main occupation was that of a farmer, but he was in partnership with his father in a Williamston mercantile business a few years.

He served as church clerk at Skewarkey 61 years, and was assistant or clerk of the Kehukee Association for 63 years. Biggs was a trustee of the old Williamston Academy 61 years before and after the Civil War, serving the board of trustees as secretary during much of that time. He was chairman of the County Court, the Inferior Court and the Martin County Board of Commissioners.

Joseph D. Biggs first married Elizabeth Davis and they had one child, Mary. His second marriage was to Fannie Latham whose maiden name was Crawford. They had two children, Joseph and Chloe. He was a brother to Asa Biggs, judge and a member of Congress; Kader Biggs, a commission merchant in Norfolk, and Louisa Biggs.

His body was buried at Skewarkey on Monday, May 20, 1889. Sylvester Hassell prepared a biographical sketch which appeared in the Skewarkey Church minutes.

Possibly one of the most diversified characters ever to live in Martin County was Docton Warren Bagley.

Son of William and Sarah Warren Bagley, he was born in Williamston on September 2, 1801. He died on February 27, 1878, and was buried in the family plot back of the present post office, near the railroad. The grave markers were removed on October 8, 1956, to the Memorial Cemetery at Moyock, Currituck County, by a great-grandson, E. G. Bagley.

Docton W. Bagley was recognized as one of the county's most outspoken patriots during the Civil War, and figured prominently in the business field. He was an influential civic leader and did much for education, serving as a trustee of the old Williamston Academy for 40 years. He lived most of his life in a house where the post office is now located. The old home now stands around the corner on South Watts Street. Mr. Bagley was associated with the formation of the old Williamston and Tarboro Railroad Co., managed boat lines and handled mail contracts.

His patriotism is reflected in a diary covering the period from August 18, 1861, to August 13, 1864. It is said there was a second diary volume, that it was destroyed. The original of the first volume is in Duke Library, and was published in 122 installments in The Enterprise, beginning August 12, 1954. Much information about the firely old gentleman appears in "The Bagley Family—1066-1958" by a great grandson, Ernest G. Bagley. A copy is in Martin Memorial Library, Williamston.

Holding a high rank among prominent Martin County men during much of the nineteenth century, Cushing Biggs Hassell was recognized as an able leader in the fields of religion, education, business, agriculture and community life. Possibly his greatest feat was the writing of a thousand-page history of "The Church of God", from the creation to A.D. 1885, including especially a history of the Kehukee Primitive Association. Not too long ago the book was in its fourth printing.

Son of Joshua W. and Martha Biggs Hassell, Cushing Biggs Hassell was born on October 14, 1809, about three miles from Williamston on Highway 17 or the Washington road. His limited schooling was completely interrupted when his father died. The 15-year-old lad ventured out on a colorful career, lasting until his death on April 11, 1880.

He was first married in 1832 to Mary Davis, daughter of Durham Davis. Seven children were born to that union. Mary Davis Hassell died in 1846, and in 1849 he married in Warwick, N. Y., Martha Maria Jewett, widow of Elder Daniel E. Jewett. Four children were born to that union.

Cushing Biggs Hassell filled many positions during his 70 years, including: trustee of Williamston Academy; founder, secretary and treasurer and librarian of Williamston Library Association; trustee and member of the board of examiners of the University of North Carolina; agent of the chairman of the board of superintendents of the common schools of Martin County, transacting all the laborious and difficult work of that office; clerk and master in Equity for Martin County; president of the Roanoke Steamship Navigation Company; treasurer of Martin County, only four votes being cast against him; delegate to the State Convention in February, 1861; and delegate to the important State Constitutional Convention in 1835.

He was licensed to preach on January 8, 1842. Ordained on December 5, 1843, he pastored Skewarkey Primitive Baptist Church about 36 years. Chosen moderator of Skewarkey Association in 1859, he served in that position until his death in April, 1880. He often visited other associations and went on missions as far away as Canada and Arkansas. During his ministry he assisted at 25 ordinations, baptized 330 persons and married 96 couples. During the first 10 years of his ministry he would receive no donations, his annual salary averaging during the next 30 years $83.92, an amount hardly large enough to pay his traveling expenses.

Despite much time spent in operating a sizable mercantile business and handling so many other duties, he devoted 700 hundred hours to the preparation and writing of the church history, mostly in the year, 1879. Pastor of Spring Green he preached his last sermon, No. 2,097, there on February 22, 1880. He attended and preached for 50 minutes at the Skewarkey Union meeting held at Conoho on February 29, 1880.

Many interesting facts about the old gentleman's life are found in his autobiography, written about 1840, his biography, written by his son, Sylvester Hassell, in April, 1880, his diary now in the U.N.C. library, Chapel Hill.

During the period from about 1828 to 1928 possibly no two men contributed more to religion, education, culture and progress in Martin County than the father-son combination of Cushing Biggs Hassell and Sylvester Hassell. The two were guiding lights during the long period and their labors and examples had a profound effect on the county and its people.

Assuming the full leadership upon his father's death in 1880, Sylvester Hassell carried on in the elder's fine tradition. His years, however, were devoted mainly to religion and education, two fields in which he gained prominence in this and other states.

Sylvester Hassell was born in Williamston July 28, 1842, son of Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell and Mary Davis Hassell. His mother died when he was four years old, and three years later his father married Mrs. Martha Maria Jewett, of whom the step-son spoke highly.

Elder Sylvester Hassell was first married to Mary Isabelle (Bell) Yarrell on September 4, 1869. His father conducted the ceremony. One son, Paul, born of the union died at the age of 15 years. Following the death of his first wife in 1871, Sylvester married Frances Louisa Woodard of Wilson on May 3, 1876. Seven children were born to this union, and only one, Calvin, is living at the present time.

Sylvester Hassell gained his basic education in the old Williamston Academy, a private institution where he later taught and served as principal.

At a time when few Southerners seldom went north to teach school, Sylvester reported to the State Normal College of Delware to fill the chair of ancient languages. He taught there and at New Castle, Delaware, until 1871, resigning at that time to teach in his home state at Wilson. In 1872 he established the Wilson Collegiate Institute and successfully managed the facility for 14 years. Numbered among his students at the Wilson school was Josephus Daniels who was later to become Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson.

Sylvester was graduated from the University of North Carolina and was awarded an honorary doctorate there. It has been said that he missed being chosen president of the university by one vote.

Sylvester and his father established service records as pastors at Skewarkey and moderators of the Kehukee Association. Although he was not licensed to preach until January 8, 1842, it is assumed Cushing Biggs Hassell pastored the church at Skewarkey about that time until his death in 1880. The elder Hassell was ordained on December 5, 1843, when he was already serving the Skewarkey church. Cushing B. Hassell served as moderator of the Kehukee Association seventeen years. Taking over the mantel of his illustrious father, Sylvester Hassell pastored the Skewarkey church from 1880 until 1928, or 48 years, boosting the total tenure to about 84 years. C. B. Hassell served as Kehukee Association moderator 17 years and his son filled the position from 1880 until his death in 1928.

After his father had just about completed the big Church History, Sylvester Hassell was assigned the task of completing and revising the task. The book was published in 1886.

Sylvester Hassell discontinued his teaching in 1890 on account of ill health, and devoted his time visiting churches in a number of states, including Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts and Canada.

In 1892 Elder Sylvester Hassell became associate editor of the "Gospel Messenger". When Elder J. R. Respass, editor-owner, died in Butler, Ga., in 1895, Sylvester Hassell bought the paper and moved it to Williamston, editing and publishing it until shortly before his death.

The minister-educator had a 3,000-volume library. A greater part of the library along with the church history copper plates was destroyed while stored in a barn on Simmons Avenue about where the Manning apartments now stand. Reflecting his honesty, a story was told about Mr. Hassell when he was listing his taxes not too many years before his death. After listing other wordly goods, the old gentleman reached into his pocket, counting and listing the change.

Among this county's earlier settlers were the Slades, a name still prominent in this section at the present time.

A family history, prepared by one Jeremiah Slade, shows that Ebenezer Slade, third son of William Slade, married Agnes McNare and settled on Roanoke River on what is now Martin County, date undetermined. Little is known about this Ebenezer.

Then Mrs. Edna Guilford Cook, a native of this county, in her "In Memory of Miriam", says a William Slade was born in what is now known as Martin County in 1745. He served in the N. C. Colonial Assembly from this county in 1769-73. He was first an ensign and later lieutenant in the 4th N. C. Regiment during the Revolutionary War.

The Slades were a prolific group, their numbers running well into the hundreds. Some moved to Georgia where one of them gained fame as a physician. Another was a surgeon in New Orleans in 1847. Another, Thomas B. Slade, moved to Mississippi and was killed in California. The sketches will be limited necessarily to just a few, including Ebenezer Slade, Jeremiah and Alfred M. Slade.

The records show that one Ebenezer Slade was a member of the N. C. Colonial Assembly on October 23, 1769. Then there was an Ebenezer Slade who served as state senator from Martin County in 1792-1796, and in the House in 1790 and 1791.

Jeremiah Slade, 4th son of William and Nancy Gainer Slade, figured prominently in politics and government. He was born in 1774 and died September 1, 1824. His body was buried at the old family plantation near Williamston.

Jeremiah Slade was in the N. C. Senate from 1809 until 1815, and served in the House 1797-1800 and 1802. One of his last acts was the sale of Middle River fishery to James B. Slade on August 14, 1824. Possibly Jeremiah's greatest work was with the Indians during the early part of the 19th century.

Researching old records at Duke Library, Durham, David W. Brown says, in part:

"The William Slade papers at Duke contain correspondence and papers of Jeremiah Slade's relations with the Indians which provide a coherent story from 1803 to 1818.

"It would seem that Jeremiah became a commissioner of Indian Affairs under the U. S. War Department in 1803. A receipt of June 17, 1803, lists him with John M. Binford and William Hawkins as acceptable to the Tuscarora chiefs, Sackarissa (spelled variously in the papers) and Longboard. Slade was to oversee the leases to the land held by the white settlers from the tribe in Bertie County. The Tuscaroras were, by this time, headquartered in Niagara, N.Y., but communication seems to have been good by mail, and the chiefs sometimes made the trip....

"Receipts and statements of Slade to the tribe are numerous. Amounts in question ranged up to thousands of dollars.

"By 1815, Slade was a brigadier general, Correspondence with the tribe in 1816 precedes the firing in 1816 of John Cain, an Indian, as the tribe's North Carolina attorney and representative, apparently for being too timid in working for rapid repeal of a state law which forbade the tribe to revoke the perpetual leases on the land. For this purpose, Chiefs Soloman Longboard and Nicholas Cusick traveled from New York. Slade is convinced that their quest is in vain, and that they may lose what they have. The conclusion to this episode is not, unfortunately, found in the papers of this collection."

It has been said that Jeremiah Slade helped with the transfer of the Tuscaroras from Bertie to New York.

Alfred M. Slade, son of Jeremiah and Janet Bog Slade, was the first worshipful master of Skewarkey Masonic Lodge in 1826. Husband of Eliza Sutton, he was sent as counsel to Buenos Aires and died there.

William Slade, fondly known as "Buck" Slade and a lieutenant in the Confederacy, (cavalry), died at his home in Williamston, corner of Smithwick Street and Simmons Avenue, on November 20, 1919. Son of the late William and Penelope Williams (?) Slade, he was born on the old Slade farm, a few miles northwest of Williamston, on April 8, 1841. He was married to Cordelia Hassell, daughter of Cushing Biggs Hassell.

One of the largest merchants at the time in Martin County, he constructed the three store buildings in the old C. B. Hassell home grove next to Branch Banking and Trust Company on Williamston's main street.

He was buried at the old family home on Hamilton Road.

One child, Annie, was born of the union, and she died when only 11 years of age.

Mrs. Slade preceded him to the grave by about four years. Surviving at the time were, two brothers, Richard Slade of Asheville and T. B. Slade, Sr., of Hamilton; two sisters, Penelope Slade of Hamilton and Mrs. Helen Rhodes of Montgomery, Ala.

(Enterprise, November 21, 1919)

The early Martin County Hardisons were active in many fields, especially politics, milling and farming. Records show that Jasper and Mary Hardison bought in 1722, 100 acres of land on Welch's Creek, purchasing an additional 1,000 acres on the south side of "Morattuch River" in 1729. The land has been referred to as "Rose's Plantation", apparently in the Rose Creek area. Jasper and Mary had seven sons and two daughters. Several of the Hardison children migrated to Tennessee. One of the sons, John, was born before 1712 and died in 1780, and one of his three sons was John, Jr. Apparently John, Jr., had important parts in government and other fields. Other Hardisons serving in the Revolutionary War were Captains Joshua and Benjamin, Sgt. Hardy who died in service in 1777, and Jesse and Joseph Hardison.

John Hardison, Jr., son of John and Olive Hardison, was born about 1735 in Tyrrell County, now Martin. The Colonial Records, vol. XXII, page 390, says: The number of men in the militia of Tyrrell County (Martin) list was 92 under Captain John Hardison in 1758.

In 1764 John Hardison "received" numerous bills for action of the Colonial Assembly meeting in Brunswick. He was appointed to the Propositions and Grievances Committee in February that year. On Wednesday, November 13, 1776, John Hardison and others were appointed as a committee to inquire what number of troops may probably be raised in the different counties and report to the House. On January 11, 1777, John Hardison was appointed a justice of the peace, to hold courts according to State laws. He was one of the delegates to the Halifax Convention of 1776. On April 24, 1778, John Hardison was made a major. Colonial Records, vol. XIII, page 393, says: "That Whitmill Hill be appointed colonel of the Martin County Regiment of Militia in the room of Williams, Esq., resigned; Thomas Wiggins, Esq., Lt. Colonel; Kenneth McKenzie, Esq., First Major; and John Hardison, Esq., Second Major of said county...." Few records have been found about John Hardison, Jr., after 1778. He had a son, John Hardison, III, who was born in 1762 and found on the Revolutionary War pension list in 1832 out in Robertson County, Tenn.

The Cherry family had a leading role in the early government of Martin County, five of its members having served in the N. C. General Assembly as far back as 1789. They were sizable landowners, and had parts in education and religion during the early days. A sizable farm a few miles northwest of Williamston is referred to as the Mary Cherry farm now owned by W. G. Peele. They were in the assembly a total of 35 years.

Jesse Cherry, Joel Cherry, Darling Cherry and Lawrence Cherry served in the N. C. Assembly from 1790 until 1825.

While he was active in government and while this county was a part of Tyrrell and Halifax, John Llewelling gained wide notoriety when he apparently led the Tories in this and adjoining counties in 1777. He had served as a justice of the peace in 1772-1776, and was recognized as a community leader.

Choosing to follow the king of England, Llewelling figured in a conspiracy designed to eliminate prominent patriots, including Nathan Mayo and several others in this county. A friend of Colonel

Nathan Mayo learned about the plot, and Llewelling was arrested, tried and sentenced to be hanged.

The case reached the N. C. General Assembly and is mentioned at length in State Records, volume 12, pages 115, 116, 118, 119, 269, 274, 278; volume 11, pages 776, 777 and 816; volume twenty-two, page 929. The Assembly was of the opinion that Old John should be executed without delay. However, one of Llewelling's planned victims, petitioned Governor Richard Caswell in behalf of the Tory. Mary Llewelling, John's wife, addressed a plea to Governor Caswell who pardoned the man along with John Wilson of the Salisbury district. The wife's plea, appearing in legislative paper, House of Commons, on November 15, 1777, apparently touched Governor Caswell and Llewelling was pardoned. After barely missing death on November 30, 1777, Llewelling rejoined his family and lived to be eighty years of age. Mary Llewelling's plea read, as follows:

"To his Excellency Richard Caswell, Esquire, Governor and Commander in Chief in and over the State of North Carolina: The Petition of Mary Lewellen, humbly Beseeching that your Excellency will be pleased to extend your abundant humanity toward your Petitioner's unfortunate Husband, who stands condemned to die at Edenton, on Tuesday the 30th of this present Instant, for the Crime of High Treason. Your Petitioner does not presume at an endeavor to lessen his guilt, but appealing to your Excellency's Clemency, and tenderly merciful Disposition, most humbly begs to be indulged while she fondly refers to the honesty and integrity, of the life and character, of her Husband, before his entering into this detested conspiracy, as well as to remind your Excellency that he fall under his present sentence (which heaven avert) the Consequence, your disconsolate Petitioner and her children will not only have to combat shame, and Disgrace but also the keenest poverty.

"Oh Sir, to Hearts torn (?) and burst asunder and overwhelmed (with?) sorrow now much harder to be born must be the Burden of Woe when aided and aggravated by Extremity poverty.

"Yet could the Confiscation take place, and the life of the unhappy misguided Criminal be spared; could he be permitted to return once more to the arms of his afflicted wife and children, the Forfeiture of his small fortune would be an offering too inconsiderable to cost one tear, one sigh with a Heart too full for further utterance your Petitioner bowed down with sorrow prostrates herself before your Excellency and in silence pleads for mercy.

"Mary Lewelling"
"Martin County."

Luke Mizelle

(Copied from N.C. Genealogy)
In Memory of Miriam by Edna Guilford Cook

Not too much is to be learned about Luke Mizelle, but he held a prominent position in the Jamesville area. The town was named after him in 1785, and he volunteered in the N. C. Militia for the 1780 expedition into the Fayetteville section.

Stephen William Outterbridge

Stephen William Outterbridge, one of the foremost elementary-high school educators during the middle and latter 1800s in Martin County, died on January 23, 1915. Son of Stephen Outterbridge, Sr., and wife, Winifred Forrest Outterbridge, he was born on January 23, 1824, a short distance from Butler's Bridge on the road leading to Hassell. He was married to Susan Ann May Andrews on March 6, 1851. He joined the Primitive Baptist Church at Spring Green, and was baptized in Conoho Creek at Butler's Bridge by Elder C. B. Hassell on the fourth Sunday in November, 1868.

Mr. Outterbridge went to school to Professor James Horner at the Horner School in Hamilton in the forties, Horner later locating in Oxford where he founded and operated the famous Horner Academy.

Mr. Outterbridge served two and one-half years in the Confederate Army as first lieutenant in Captain William Biggs' Company, 17th N. C. Regiment. After the war he was elected to the N. C. Legislature two terms. He began teaching in 1843, and after teaching one year in Arkansas, located in Hamilton and taught there. The rising educator maintained a school at Crape Myrtle in a small building in the yard of his birthplace, locating in Robersonville in 1885. He taught in his private school until the 1890s and also in the public schools, retiring about 1901, after teaching three generations of youths during a 50-year period.

His influence upon his pupils was excellent and of a lasting nature. According to their means, the renowned professor and his wife were said to have done more for the church than any other family in the county, proclaiming the finest of life's ideals and setting the good example in every walk of life.

For many years he was the clerk at Spring Green and the Skewarkey Union, and assistant clerk of the Kehukee Association.

He was buried in the Robersonville cemetery.

His maxims were: "Education is to the mind what grinding is to the axe," "A finely equipped ship without a rudder is soon wrecked,' "To utilize dry putty is to pour in the oil and hammer it," "Promptness is the life of business," "Study to be obedient," and "Determine to do right and govern thyself."

Thomas Stewart

Thomas Stewart was a prominent surveyor when Martin County was formed out of Tyrrell and Halifax. The first courts were held on his lands about where Skewarkey Church now stands. He was one of the introducers of an abortive state law to erect this county out of Tyrrell and Halifax on February 17, 1773.

Samuel Smithwick

The Smithwicks had a leading role in the early colonization of this county and area, taking parts in land sales, politics and the building of roads and bridges. Edward was one of the first known Martin County men to serve in the Colonial Assembly dating back to the early 1700s. Samuel Smithwick represented Tyrrell County (now Martin) in the Colonial and General assemblies, served as a justice of the peace and as county representative in the Provincial Congress at Halifax on November 12, 1776. He also served as a town commissioner for the town of Jamestown in 1785 and for the town of Squawaky (Williamston) in 1790.

While the Smithwicks name has about petered out in this county, there were until some years ago quite a few who held prominent positions in various fields. The name is a bit confusing since there are Edmond Edward Smithwick, Edmondson Smithwick, Samuel Smithwick, Ebeneezer Smithwick and others.

Smithwick Creek was named after the early Smithwick pioneers.

Wheatley (Whitley)

The Wheatley (Whitley) family had leading parts in several fields of endeavor, dating back to at least 1740.

Samuel C. Wheatley I, an Englishman, emigrated to America as early as 1739. He served as a juryman in Tyrrell County (Martin) in February, 1740. He was granted about 300 acres of land by Carteret, one of the Lords Proprietors, in 1742. Samuel Wheatly served in the Revolutionary War, and a descendant, George Whitley, won glory on the battlefields during the Civil War. Samuel served as a justice in the Tyrrell (Martin) Precinct courts.

Augustus Whitley

James Augustus Whitley, one of 3 Confederate soldiers farthest at

Gettysburg, died in Rocky Mount on June 13, 1915, at the home of a daughter. The body was returned to Everetts, and burial was in the family cemetery on the farm now owned by Bobby Clark.

He was born in Martin County in 1842, and married in 1866 to Addie Perkins of Pitt County. There were six children born to the union, all of whom but one were living at the time of his death. His early manhood was spent in Hamilton where he engaged in the mercantile business, later purchasing and moving to the farm near Everetts.

He served the county as a member of the board of commissioners, in the N. C. State Legislature as a member of the House for two terms, and was a recognized Masonic leader.
(Enterprise, June 16, 1915)

Durham Davis

While little is known about him, Col. Durham Davis was listed as an influential citizen in Williamston during the early 1800s. He was a leader in the educational field, agriculture and cultural activities. He was born March 18, 1786, and died on July 17, 1829. Son of William Davis and a Williams woman, believed to have been a sister of Col. William Williams, he was buried in the Davis graveyard near the northwestern limits of the town of Williamston.

Armstrong

General Frank A. Armstrong brought fame to himself, the United States and his native home, Hamilton, when he made the first daylight raid on Germany during World War II. He was born in Hamilton, son of Frank Armstrong, Sr., of Hobgood, and Annie Hobbs, formerly of Williamston. The general made his home in Williamston with his grandparents, Former Register of Deeds and Mrs. J. A. Bobbs. The movie, "Twelve O'Clock High" was based on a portion of General Armstrong's career.

Wilson Gray Lamb

Wilson Gray Lamb, one of Williamston's finest adopted sons, died on February 22, 1922, in a Rocky Mount hospital where he had been ill for three weeks.

He was born in Pasquotank County on November 17, 1842, son of Wilson G. Lamb, Sr., a member of the Lamb families of Revolutionary War fame, and Eliza Williams, also a native of Pasquotank. He was one of nine children. A brother, Col. John C. Lamb, a distinguished Confederate soldier, was killed at Drewry's Bluff.

After finishing his schooling in Pasquotank preparatory schools, he was appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy, returning to his native county just before the Civil War, later to engage with his brother, John C. Lamb, in the shingle and lumber business in Williamston. On March 21, 1862, he enlisted in Company A, 17th North Carolina Regiment, which was captained by his brother, John C. Lamb, and made up mostly of Martin County youths. He was promoted to second lieutenant in 1863, and fought in engagements in two states during the four war years. He was wounded during the Petersburg battles. At the end of the war he had Pvt. Abe Thomas hid the regimental flag under a saddle and he brought it through Yankee lines at Chapel Hill, later delivering it to Mr. Lamb. The flag, used for some time in public places on patriotic occasions, Mr. Lamb turned it over to the N. C. Hall of History.

After the war, he returned to Williamston and engaged in naval stores, shingles and general merchandise. He later went with Daniel Miller Co., one of the larger wholesale mercantile firms in Baltimore. He was affiliated with the firm until his death.

He was first in war and peace, giving of his time and means to the support of religion, business and civic affairs. He is rated among the first in Martin County patriotic lists, and a great leader of men. He helped North Carolina and the South in their struggle to rid a war-torn land of the carpetbaggers and the misrule of an ignorant, misguided people.

He reorganized the order of "Cincinnati" in this state after the war, and served as its state president until his death.

He was married to Virginia Louisa Cotten, daughter of Arthur Staton Cotten and wife. Eight children were born of the union: John Cotten Lamb who married Frances McRae, Wilson Gray Lamb, III, who never married; Luke Lamb who married Vada Wynne, Virginia Cotten Lamb who married Frederick K. Bullock, Della Lamb who married Howard Herrick, Sr., Louise Mayo Lamb who never married, Eliza Williams Lamb who married Dr. Chas. H. C. Mills, and Annie Staton Lamb who married Herbert Lilley. Mrs. Herrick died a few years after her marriage, leaving two children, Howard Herrick, Jr., and Virginia Herrick, who then made their home with their grandfather and aunts for a number of years before going to New York and later to Richmond.

Jesse R. Stubbs

The Tarboro Southerner, in its editions of September and October, 1870, carried brief accounts of General Jesse R. Stubbs' illness and resolutions of respect.

General Stubbs, father of the late Harry W. Stubbs, who was prominent in legal and legislative circles in this State for many years, figured prominently in the early history of railroad construction in this section of the State. At the time of his death in early October, 1870, General Stubbs was president of the Williamston and Tarboro Railroad Company.

In its edition of September 29, 1870, the Tarboro Southerner carried the following account of General Stubbs' illness:

We very much regret to hear of the extreme illness of Gen. J. R. Stubbs, President of the Williamston & Tarboro Railroad. Latest reports from Williamston state that he is in a very critical condition, and fears are entertained for his recovery. North Carolina can ill afford to lose such a citizen as Gen. Stubbs.

Rev. Thomas Benbury Haughton

Episcopal Minister Made Great Impression On This Community

Daughter recalls events in their home here—Mrs. Eliza Haughton Randolph Reviews Record of Noble Leader

By Eliza Haughton Randolph

By ancestry, Rev. Thomas Benbury Haughton was endowed with patriotism and leadership that was manifest throughout his ministry and war record. His great uncle, Thomas Benbury, signed "The Test" on record in St. Paul's Church, Edenton. Ann Haughton, great grandmother, and Ruth Benbury, great aunt, names are inscribed on a table on the Court House as members of the Edenton Tea Party. The Queen Ann table which youpon tea was poured at this tea party is owned by my sister, Mrs. George Collins Wood, having been given to her by her father-in-law, Frank Wood, historian of Edenton and Chowan County. This table still bears stains of the youpon tea.

In our possession is a photostatic copy of a land grant given by Lord Granville, May 1, 1668, and signed by John Haughton in which was given privilege of hunting, fishing, and hawgings. On this land was the plantation of Locust Grove, 12 miles from Edenton, where Thomas Benbury Haughton was born November 16th, 1832. He was the 12th child of Charles Haughton and Margaret Nash of Edenton, and the grandson of Charles Haughton and Tamah Benbury. According to an old English custom each of their 6 sons bore their mother's maiden name of Benbury. At the age of one month my father was baptized in St. Paul's Church, Edenton, by the rector, Dr. Samuel Johnston who also was his Godfather. This special blessing carried with it a deep religious spirit and love for humanity that was ever present throughout his life and ministry.

It was at Benson, N.C., that two men were to be shot at dawn for desertion. When brought to father's attention he immediately dispatched a courier to General Whiting at Goldsboro stating he knew the men from his home town, Plymouth, and they had had no idea of deserting. If they waited to get permission their children would be dead, as was the wife of one and they soon returned to their regiment. All night father prayed with them in their tent while the weird sound of making their coffins outside rang through the air.

Just before dawn faithful Nellie covered with foam brought the reprieve from General Whiting. After the war these friends whom he had saved from death carved out of walnut a clock with all the insigna of masonry, and presented it to my father. That clock is still ticking, keeping good time and is my prized possession.

The solid mahogany chest carried by my father throughout the war as a medicine chest, was later used as a stool of repentance. "Sit there till you are good", my mother would say pointing to that chest, and then demand a kiss and smile before we continued our play.

While a young man my father went to work for Sharpe and Dohme, druggists in Baltimore, which gave him a great knowledge of drugs. While making social calls in Baltimore dressed in Prince Albert and Beaver, his foot slipped and he rode down the hill on his Beaver that flattened to a pancake. He had a great sense of humor that was ever present.

The Haughtons were a musical family, father being a violinist and his brother, Julian, a cellist. Mrs. Walker McPugh told me how they were paddled in boat to play at her wedding at Windsor. Father's lovely baritone was passed on to his grandsons, Norman C. Cordon, Jr., of the Metropolitan Opera Company and Thomas Lamb Cordon, bass baritone.

When the Federal Army occupied Plymouth the lovely Gothic church pews and altar were chopped up to kindle fires, and horses and sheep were stabled inside. This desecration my father found upon his return after the war and becoming Rector of Grace Church. His good friend and former parisioner, Mr. Josiah Collins of Creswell, had vast rice fields and reinstated the church to its former beauty. Under the direction of the present minister, the Reverend Charles Spruill, the lighting fixtures of wrought iron lanterns, have been given by father's children as a memorial.

While working for the drug firm in Baltimore, the young man received the ministerial call. Anxious to keep him with them, the drug firm executives said they would make him a partner with the promise of a handsome income. The company went on to make millions. They pointed out that he would starve to death as a minister down in Eastern Carolina.

Undaunted, father returned home, taught school in Washington County and studied for the ministry under the Rev. Edward M. Forbes an educator of note, who had a parish school in Elizabeth City. He was advanced to the priesthood while rector of Christ Church in New Bern.

It was there that the most embarrassing incident of his ministry occurred. Father Patterson, rector of St. John's in Wilmington, was called to bury a former parishioner, and father was to have the committal. The undertaker stepped forward with a handful of earth, and the grave fell in, landing the undertaker on top of the casket. It took many to extricate him. Father Patterson, a brilliant man, was seized with laughter, and the service could not be continued until the laughter subsided.

In the days of my father's ministry, the Bishop had the placing of the clergy. Father was given a group of churches, including Plymouth, Creswell, Jamesville and others, maintaining residence in Plymouth.

After the war he was called to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Charlotte by the Senior Warden, Captain John Wilkes, who was with him in the war and knew of his fearless leadership. Bishop Atkinson said the church in Eastern North Carolina was weak, and that he, as a missioner, could not be replaced. He continued at his post, serving faithfully his church and fellowman.

I cannot speak of my father's ministry without mentioning my mother, Susan Elizabeth Lamb of Elizabeth City and Williamston. Bishop Atkinson said that she was as much of the ministry as father, so cooperative in all the activities of the church. I have known her to ring the bell, lead the choir, and with a pew full of her brother's family, Col. Wilson G. Lamb, and others and father's lovely baritone, there was always good music at the church of the Advent. Mother found time to teach Murt and Carrie Sitterson and Ella Thrower to succeed her as organist.

One of father's parishioners, Miss Helen Blount Slade, told father she would build a rectory if he would locate in Williamston. Ten years later the street bearing his name was opened. The rectory, built on the corner of Haughton and Main streets, was later moved to an adjoining lot, and is now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William W. Biggs.—Article by Daughter,Eliza Haughton Randolph

The ministry moved here from Plymouth October 17, 1873 and in that year St. Martin's at Hamilton was admitted into union with the Convention of the Diocese. Mr. Haughton had opened a missionary station at Hamilton in 1868.

At the centennial celebration of the Church of the Advent, October 20, 1950 the following was noted:

"From 1866 until 1894, a span of 28 years, the Rev. Thomas B. Haughton had served as Rector of the Church of the Advent. It was during this ministry that the foundations of the parish were solidly laid. We have the Bishop's own words as touching the deatl. of this faithful servant: 'November 7, 1894. In St. Thomas', Windsor, I took part in the Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, preached twice, celebrated, and confirmed one person presented by the T. B. Haughton. This was the last time I saw my old friend and brother, alive. We had served together all day and had eaten together, he being, as I supposed, in his usual health. At night we bade each other goodbye, not knowing it to be for life. In the morning we started upon our different routes. He drove home, and before retiring, prepared himself for the Thanksgiving service of the next day. But, just before midnight, his Lord came, and, after a mortal struggle of about 20 minutes, he passed on unto the more immediate Presence. It was a very sad event to me. I had known him for 40 years. He had been a personal friend, one who had greatly served me, as a layman, and afterward as a faithful Priest. We had been together as Chaplains in the army. His house was my home when in his Parish. Its doors, indeed, were always open to his brethren, with a hospitality beyond his means. For many years the Rector of the Church of the Advent, Williamston, it will be heard to fill his place."

Mr. Haughton married Miss Susan Elizabeth Lamb, sister of the late Colonel Wilson G. Lamb of Williamston, and aunt of Mr. Wilson G. Lamb, Miss Mayo Lamb and Mrs. Annie Lamb Lilley, now of Williamston. Their marriage formed a strong force for the advancement of the church and the welfare of all. It has been said that while Mr. Haughton was extending alms at the front door of the rectory, Mrs. Haughton would be giving the hungry food at the back. It is well known that they denied themselves to better serve others.

Mr. Haughton was a thoughtful person, too. When the late Henry Groves Connor came to preside over his first term of court, he was just arising in the old Kirby hotel, where Darden's store now stands, when he heard a man tell the hotel keeper to look after the jurist's comfort, to see to his every need. That was Mr. Haughton and his way of life, always acting to make life a little better for the other fellow. Judge Connor, years later, recalled the little incident and said he would remember the minister's kindness as long as he lived.

Rejecting promising financial offers and refusing attractive calls to big churches, the minister went about his work, and although his material accumulations were few, he left a great heritage. Members of his immediate family went on to figure prominently in business undertakings, religious and civic activities and in politics of both State and nation. He was the grand old man of Reconstruction, one who ably and willingly laid the foundation for a richer and finer heritage.

His labors well done in the name of his Lord and in behalf of his fellowman, he, with other members of his family, rests at peace under several tall oak trees in Woodlawn Cemetery, his life and works serving as a true beacon for others to follow.

Dennis Simmons Biggs

Son of John Dawson and Fannie Alexander Biggs

Dennis Simmons Biggs, son of the late John Dawson Biggs and Fannie S. Biggs, was one of Williamston's most promising young men. He was born on August 8, 1872, and died on March 21, 1907.

He founded the Farmers and Merchants Bank, a parnter with Wheeler Martin in a large furniture manufacturing business in Williamston, treasurer of the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company, and an able leader in the civic and other affairs of the town and county.

When fire destroyed the large plant of Biggs and Martin Furniture Manufacturing Company, he wanted to rebuild. The action possibly could have made Williamston the furniture capital of North Carolina.

He was president and one-third owner of Dennis Simmons Lumber Co., also president of Farmers and Merchants Bank, Martin County Tobacco Warehouse Co., Martin County Real Estate Co., Martin Livestock Co., Roanoke and Tar River Steamboat Co., and the Lotus Club, and a director in Bank of Plymouth, The North Carolina Pine Association, and a stockholder in Bank of Kenly, Merchants National Bank of Wilmington, Norfolk National Bank, Martin County Buggy Co., Enterprise Printing Co., and Southern Veneer Co. He was an Elk and a member of the Charitable Brotherhood.

He helped the less fortunate and encouraged the well-to-do.

In his holograph will he left his entire estate, valued at between one-quarter and one-half million dollars, to his wife, nee Fannie Chase.

During the latter part of the 1800s and the early part of the current century, Dennis Simmons figured in lumber manufacturing, transportation and other promotional undertakings. In 1882 he was president of the Roanoke, Norfolk and Baltimore Steamboat Company. Listed as a lumber dealer in 1887, Simmons developed a large lumber manufacturing plant at Astoria , near Jamesville with main offices in Williamston. In 1891 he formed a partnership with T. W. Tilghman and they operated manufacturing units in several areas. Simmons based his operations on a $20,000 advance made by his brother. Simmons's nephew, Dan Simmons, and Tilghman had leading parts in the operations. The Astoria operation built tram roads as far away as Bear Grass Township. The company closed down its Astoria operation in or about 1919.

John Dawson Biggs, Sr.

Was born November 19, 1839, and died May 22, 1905. He began his business career as a clerk in the C. B. Hassell store. He volunteered for service in the Civil War as a private. He became a lieutenant, and, at the death of Captain William Lanier in 1864, was made captain of Company H, 61st N. C. Infantry. He participated in the battle of Kinston in 1862, siege of Charleston, battles around Suffolk, Drewry's Bluff, Howlett House on May 20, 1864, Cold Harbor where Clingman was wounded, battles around Petersburg, Ream's Station and the Crater, and was in the fighting around Wilmington in 1865, and fought around Kinston and Bentonville. In the latter battle he was wounded and hospitalized in Greensboro, limping on a lame leg from the hospital all the way to his home in Williamston.

He was in a business partnership with a relative by marriage, Dennis Simmons, about 25 years. Later he formed another partnership with John W. Davenport of Bertie County, and encountered reverses. Mr. Biggs later paid everyone of his outstanding accounts. He became manager of Dennis Simmons Lumber Company, serving also as secretary and treasurer. He was a large farmer, and served as chairman of the board of directors for Central Hospital, Raleigh, an office he held for more than 20 years.

His standing in the life of his community and the hearts of his fellowman was best exemplified at his funeral in his home, corner of Biggs and Ray streets, Williamston, where the last vehicle was leaving the house when the first one arrived at the then Baptist Cemetery (Woodlawn). His funeral procession was the largest ever held in Williamston.

Dr. John Dawson Biggs, Jr.

Dr. John Dawson Biggs, Jr., was one of the town's first regular dentists. He practiced dentistry in Williamston about five years. He was active in banking and other business circles, and was a leader in civic affairs for years. A part owner, he served the Williamston Telephone Company as secretary-treasurer and at one time as general manager. He was a member of the Central Hospital Board of Directors, Raleigh, in 1905, succeeding his father in that position.

When the 1920 financial crash struck, Dr. Biggs drew on all his assets and saved the Farmers and Merchants Bank, founded by his brother, Dennis.

Obituary of
JAMES E. MOORE

James Edwin Moore, son of Eld. Clayton Moore and Elizabeth Smithwick Moore was born near Jamesville, Martin Co., January 30th, 1841, and died at his home in Williamston, N.C., June 17, 1898. He was married Feb. 1, 1870 to Miss Jane Stuart Sykes and their children Bettie, wife of Dr. W.H. Harrell, Jennie, Mattie, James Edwin and Clayton and Maurice are still living in Williamston. Bro. Moore and his wife came before the church at Skewarky near Williamston, N.C. Saturday, August 11, 1877, and upon a relation of their spiritual exercise were received to membership and were baptized in Roanoke River the next day by my father Eld. C. B. Hassell. He and I were classmates at Williamston Academy in the fifties and were class and room mates at the University of N. C. at Chapel Hill when our class graduated in 1862. He then entered and remained in the Confederate service till the end of Civil War. I was baptized in January 1864 and ordained to the ministry in August 1874 and after Bro. Moore joined the church in 1877 our previous natural affection for each other was cemented by still stronger spiritual ties which increased with years and which death instead of severing has only hallowed. About fifteen years before his death he was licensed to exercise a gift which it was thought he had although he did not seek such a privilege. He spoke occasionally in church meetings, especially when there was no ordained minister present and his words were blessed to the comfort and edification of his Brothers and Sisters. He never solicited or desired ordination. He was an able lawyer, a wise counselor and true patriot if he had been willing to sacrifice principles to policy he could have obtained high political office. He so much preferred the love and service of Christ to wordly honors that he once declared to me that he would not give his pocket handkerchef for the Presidency of U.S. He was gifted fluent and touching in public prayer. The earnest preaching of the pure and simple gospel of Christ often moved him to tears even when every other eye in the congregation was dry. He loved to entertain his brethren at his home and to converse with them and with his family on religious subjects. He thoroughly disapproved of vain speculation in our pulpit and periodicals and he heartily condemned heated controversies leading to discussions on minor or on mysterious subjects. He thought such evil sprung from ignorance, weakness and pride, although he had a fine physical appearance generally weighing about 200 lbs. he suffered most of his life from some kind of indigestion which may have been some what hereditary and which was probably increased by great intellectual and little physical exercise.

During the last three months of 1897 and the first two or three of 1898 he had an acute pain just below the stomach believed to have been caused by a morbid growth in his abdomen and after being relieved of this he was extremely nervous and feeble and he became very pale and thin. He had the best medicine attention from Dr. Harrell and specialist in Baltimore. When not able to walk or ride out to our meetings a mile from town he still attended our meetings in the Hall in town and he greatly enjoyed this privilege. The last of the meetings he attended was on 1st Sunday in April. I spoke from Zech. 111-7-9 he was melted down in reflecting upon the sufferings of Christ in connection with his own suffering and the blessed consolation of this gospel of the son of God seemed sweeter and richer to him than ever before. He was enabled to manifest wonderful patience in his sufferings and he was so completely resigned to his Heavenly Father that he said he would not raise his hand to change the will of the Lord in regard to his living or dying. As the light of a new day dawns upon the western hemisphere, on Friday, June 17, 1898 I believe that the light of eternal morning dawns upon our dear Brother and that his ransomed spirit leaving without a struggle or a pain its tenement of clay ascended through rich and reigning grace into the immediate holy and blissful presence of God. At 3 p.m. on Sunday, June 19 services lasting 15 minutes consisting of a few remarks of his life and faith and death. The reading of 1st. Cor. 40-35-58 and one of his favorite hymns “Religion is the chief concern of mortals here below.” and prayer was held at his late residence and after his favorite psalm 19th and the hymn of which he was fondest “Rock of Ages Cleft for Me” were repeated at the grave, his remains were intered, in the presence of a goodly concourse of friends in the new cemetery at Williamston, N.C. and from this condition of corruption and mortality his body to be raised to a condition of incorruption and immortality by the power and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ at his second personal body coming to this world.

Sylvester Hassell

Williamston, N.C.
August 30, 1898

Bryant Bennett

Listed among the prominent merchants of the county more than one hundred years ago was Bryant Bennett. He was a great patriot during the Civil War, raising provisions and arms for the military and giving freely of his worldly goods to those in need. He died on March 7, 1884. A son, William Henry Bennett, served as register of deeds in this county.

Samuel Hyman

Samuel Hyman was a pioneer in private education in this county. He donated the land for the old Williamston Academy in 1817. The first school later became known as Williamston Graded School, and more recently it was called Church Street School. The property was abandoned as a school in 1975 when other buildings were constructed.

Jesse Cooper

Little is known about his accomplishmens, but Jesse Cooper rated as a prominent politician during the first half of the 19th century. He served in the N. C. legislature fourteen terms, the longest tenure of any legislator from Martin County. He was a delegate to the 1835 constitutional convention. He died at his residence near Hamilton on April 2, 1859, in his 83rd year.

J. P. Butler

Quite a few Negroes gained prominence and figured in the history of this county. Possibly the one who did the most effective work among whites and blacks in the fields of education, religion and banking was J. P. Butler, an adopted son.

Butler, born in May, 1843, in Detroit, located at the age of 18 years in Haiti, W. I., and moved to Jamesville about 1870. He was mayor of Jamesville from 1875 to 1877, served as justice of the peace seven years, and was a delegate to the National Republican Cnnvention, first at Chicago and then at Minneapolis. Founder of the J. P. Butler Institute in Jamesville, he taught school there for 30 years, served as a member of Martin County Board of Education during the fusionist period. He was a member of the Episcopal Church in Williamston 40 years.

Indicative of his efforts to promote his people and prepare them for useful lives, was the organization of a charitable insurance society, one of the first of its kind in North Carolina.

It was said upon his death on March 18, 1923: "No citizen of the community was more highly respected for truth and honesty than J. P.

Butler. He taught truth and honesty as being the base of good citizenship."

Butler was buried in an obscure grave not far from his old school.

George Thomas Hill

Among those Negro citizens who contributed much to education and religion during the early part and on down in the 20th century was George Thomas Hill.

He was born in Washington County on February 18, 1872, and located in Williamston in 1909, after working his way through public schools and State Normal at Plymouth. He taught school in Martin, Tyrrell, Halifax and Pitt counties, always striving "to lift the veil of ignorance from his people." He devoted sixty-five years of his life to the ministry, always teaching basic principles and supporting them with his good examples.

Even in his declining years he went about doing good for others, always injecting honor and integrity into every task he handled.

He died on June 25, 1959, ending a life ever so useful to this area and all its people.

This county has had quite a few prominent Negroes, including Oliver Carter, George Thomas Hill and others. Carter, a resident of Parmele, served out of the county agent's office for a goodly number of years, accomplishing ever so much for members of his race in the field of agriculture. Hill, an humble teacher-preacher, possibly holds a position next to Butler in the field of education in this county. Even in his retirement and in his eighties, the old professor continued to work, teaching and preaching a basic way of life suitable for all to follow.

This county has produced other prominent men, white and black, but accurate records of their lives and activities could not be found.

CHAPTER X

INVENTIONS

Martin County over the years has produced a goodly number of inventors, some of their contraptions altering the courses in agriculture, mechanics and other fields.

Possibly one of the most useful early inventions was that of Joseph L. Woolard and his brother, James Asa. In the late 1800's the brothers devised, manufactured and sold the Woolard harrow or straddle plow. It is said that the harrow was the first farm instrument that cultivated both sides of a row at the same time. Prior to that time the old cotton and turning plows were used to cultivate the crops.

The operation, housed in a shop measuring 30 by 60 feet, figured prominently in the agricultural revolution in this and other states. In 1903, the brothers moved their plant from its home base in the Macedonia section of Bear Grass Township eight miles south of Williamston on Highway 17, and located it on Washington Street. It was later sold to S. R. Biggs Iron and Motor Works. Part of the building was occupied for a number of years by Lindsley Equipment Company.

The operation was just about closed down following the 1929 financial crash. When the patent expired a Virginia firm manufactured the harrow, but walking and riding cultivators were already taking over in cultivation by that time.

When the mules began disappearing from the farms and the tractor moved in, one-, two- and four-or-more row cultivators took over on the farms, the departure being even more startling than the introduction of the Woolard harrow back in 1890.

In an interview back in February, 1966, Mr. Rome Rogerson who was 88 years of age at the time, told much about the operation. Rogerson was a lad of only 12 years but he worked part time in the factory and on the farm.

He explained that the inventors-manufacturers bought the iron and wrought it by hand. The forge bellows or blower was manually operated, but later the brothers rigged up a steam engine and it was used to run the blower. Handles were purchased but the beams were made by the inventors for the harrow.

"The four or five employees 'turned out' five or six harrows a day, and they were sold for as little as $3.50 each, the sales extending into several states.

"Joseph L. Woolard, a large man, was an able mechanic. He also invented a gate that could be operated by pulleys and ropes, making it unnecessary for one to get out of a vehicle to open and close it. James Asa Woolard never married. He fell off a house, and as a semi-invalid he was able to work little after the incident. Another brother, Robert, lived and farmed in Pitt County."

In addition to the harrow manufacturing, the Woolards made tobacco flues and tobacco trucks and operated a cotton gin on their farm. They also made wagons and carts.

Mr. Rogerson also said the manufacturing and farm work were handled together, the work forces shifting from factory to the fields and from the fields to the factory.

The late Joe Peel, a respected colored citizen, was one of the first employees at the Woolard factory. He continued at the trade after the business was sold to the Biggs firm, later operating an independent blacksmith shop on Washington Street at Peel Street. Alonza Daniel was another early worker for the Woolards. "Skippy" Hodges was the main painter for the operation. He spent the week-ends in Williamston, the Woolards would pick him up early Mondays, and he lived with them until the end of the work week on Saturdays.

A replica of the harrow is in Martin Memorial Library.

Some of the descendants of Joseph L. Woolard are several grandchildren, including Mrs. Robt. L. Coburn, Mrs. Eva Harris, Mrs. Josephine Holding, Mrs. Louise Parker and Thaddeus F. Harrison, II.

Harvesting Revolution

While the Woolards started a revolution in agriculture with their new cultivation invention, Jim Brown Holliday, a Jamesville farmer, started a new era with his manual-mechanical tobacco harvester. Co-working with Leonard Holliday, the young inventor started working on the new machine in 1952. Many of the parts were handforged in A. E. Browder's machine shop in Williamston, and the first trials were held on the Holliday farm near Jamesville during the 1953 harvesting season. The machine was mass-produced by Harrington Manufacturing Company, Lewiston, and hundreds of the unique machines were sold.

The basic principles of the machine were copied by other manufacturers, and other semi-mechanical harvesters were placed on the market. About twenty years later, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco

Company, working with engineers at N. C. State University, came out with a strictly mechanical harvester. At the present time the mechanical harvester is rapidly gaining popularity in combination with a bulk-curing system. There are twenty-five and possibly more of the harvesters in operation in this county.

The first Holliday harvester model is mounted on what appears to be a triangle base, propelled by an eight-horse motor mounted on the second "story" of the machine. Nine crew members handled the operation, including the driver. Four primers, their seats adjusted to the harvest, sent the tobacco up on endless chains to the loopers on the top "story". The looped tobacco, stored about one hundred sticks on the machine, would be transferred to trucks at the end of the rows and moved to the curing barn.

The Holliday harvester marked the beginning of the end of the narrow tobacco truck, and the age-old method of harvesting tobacco.

Train Air Brake

Other than verbal stories, no authentic information has been found about Staton Bailey and his connection with the Westinghoue air brake for trains. It has been said that the brake, a boon to train travel, was invented by Bailey, a native of Bear Grass. Invented about 1868, the brake was used that year on passenger trains. Bailey was hardly old enough at the time to have invented the brake. It is possible that he made some improvements at a later date, the word-of-mouth stories claiming he was paid $5,000 by Westinghouse. Other stories say Bailey squandered the money on a wild vacation spent in Florida. It is to be admitted that all the facts and dates are difficult to determine.

Bailey is known to have tinkered much with machinery, and perfected a special hitch to fasten shafts to a buggy. It was called the Bailey hitch.

The man is also known to have operated saw mills in the town of Bailey and Bear Grass. Some say the name of the Bailey town was named for him, but residents of the town say it was named for a Bailey family who lived in the area.

When teams of mules were unable to move a saw mill steam boiler through the deep Bear Grass sand, Bailey invented what is believed to have been the first tractor ever seen in the county. Using parts of an old Model T Ford, Bailey fitted them into a pattern and the contraption with its steel-cleated wheels moved the boiler. Urbin Rogers recalls seeing the machine about 1915 or 1916.

It was also said that Bailey tinkered with perpetual motion. Using two wooden wheels, special springs and weights, he would give "The Thing" a little push, making it run for two minutes.

Bailey was married and he and his wife had a daughter. The mother and daughter left the county and nothing was ever heard from them after their departure, as far as it can be learned. The inventor, said to have led an adventurous life, spent much time in Georgia. In his declining years he returned to Georgia where he was said to have died at an advanced age. His burial place cannot be learned.

Fishing Machine

From the early days and on down through the 1930's, Roanoke River herrings figured prominently in the diet of the inhabitants in this county and all along the stream. The great demand for the fish prompted a man said to have been a Smithwick to invent the fishing machine, supplementing the catches made in other nets and seines. No date of the invention is known, but machines were said to have been in operation back in the middle 1700's or earlier.

The fishing machine now has only limited operations in the Roanoke. Ernie Gardner operated a two-net machine last year at Jamesville. Following in the steps of his grandfather and father, Joe Roberson, Sr., and Jr., Frankie Roberson built and operated machines in the river last year. John Dennis Harrison also operated a machine in the stream for several years during the 1970's.

Harvesting Improved

When just about all their peanuts were placed in small stacks for curing, the farmers would then transfer them to the picker at a central location. Realizing the procedure was a slow one, Farmer Tommy Holliday and his son-in-law, Jay Coltrain, invented a cradle, or stack-lifter, and attached it to a tractor, speeding up the operation considerably. Other farmers soon came along with similar cradles. They worked well until the combines moved in to harvest the crop.

Octagon Soap

While living in old Dymond City, Griffins Township, Martin County, about 1883, a Mrs. Elkington invented the world-famous "Octagon Soap". Gaining her idea from some of the older women in the area, Mrs. Elkington made the soap for herself and a few friends. When she moved to Philadelphia, presumably in the late 1880's or early 1890's, she continued making the special soap for herself and neighbors, the latter finding it a remarkable soap.

A Mr. Hanes was attracted by the merits of the soap, and reportedly procured a patent, calling it "Octagon" on account of its shape. The formula was said to have been sold to Colgate-Palmolive-Peat. For many years the shape of the soap bar featured the advertisements of the manufacturer who pointed out it was easier to hold than the square-shaped bars of "Old Monday", and other contemporary brands.

Millions of people used Octagon as their main soap for many years, and it is still being used on a limited basis today.

Cotton Planter

Little can be learned about it today, but old records clearly indicate a cotton planter was invented in 1877, presumably by a Martin County man, T. M. Barnes.

Tobacco Setter

No definite information is available, but it was said that a Martin County man, name unknown, made a hand tobacco setter soon after the turn of the century. For many years after tobacco was introduced into the county back in the late 1890's, farmers used a peg to make a hole, placed the plant there and pressed dirt around it with their hands. The wooden contraption, slanted to a point, made it possible for the user to drop a plant into the fairly wide mouth and it would fall into a hole made by the gadget. Dirt would then be pushed around the plant by foot.

The mechanical transplanter eliminated the hand-setter, but it is often used today for resetting.

Drainage Invention

The late Jesse Stuart Whitley, father of John Whitley and Mrs. Curtis Roberson, and the late Herbert Whitley, invented sectional platforms for drainage draglines. "The Excavating Engineer" in its August, 1916, edition said Whitley made the world's record for largest yardage made in a single shift with the aid of the platforms. The drainage feat was 177 lineal feet which is computed at 2,660 cubic yards.

Filleting Machine

William A. Ellison, a Williamston native, is credited, along with two or three others, with inventing a filleting machine in the late 1920's. The invention was a boon to the fish industry.

Formulas, Remedies and Recipes

There have been quite a few other inventors, dealing with hair grooming, medical remedies, recipes and possibly others. There could be other inventors, but no records in those cases have been found.

Back in the twenties, Julius S. Peel prepared a formula for hair grooming. It was short lived.

In the early 1830's, quite a few remedies were offered, including "cures" for dropsy, staggers, smallpox, scarlet fever, rheumatism, and hives. The recipes were for the best whiskey, yeast cookies, potato pudding and fritters, and rolls for teat.

The remedies and recipes were found in the miscellaneous papers of the late William Slade. They were placed in Duke Library, presumably by the late Warren H. Biggs.

CHAPTER XI

BOOKS

Authored by Martin County People

Not too much is known about some of the authors and their works, but Martin County has, over a period of about 140 years, produced a number of writers, many of whom gained national recognition. However, most of the books are irrelevant as far as the history of this county is concerned. Much county information is found in the Whittlesey and McCallum books while Hassells' Church History is mainly limited to the religious field.

One of the first books authored by a Martin County man, Elder Joseph Biggs, is "A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist (Primitive) Association". While its main subject deals with the church, the book has other pertinent facts. Published by the Tarborough "Free Press" in 1834, the book has 300 pages. The first part of the book is based on Burkitt and Read's history of the same association, and much of the data there are incorporated in several chapters of Hassells' church history.

One of the more prolific writers by a native of this county was Sarah Johnson Cogswell Whittlesey, a daughter of the first principal of the old Williamston Academy, Luman Whittlesey. She wrote "Bertha, the Beauty", (1871), much of which was based on the times in Martin County during the Civil War. Miss Whittlesey moved with her family from Williamston to the upper part of the county during the Civil War and they were at home on what is now known as the farm of the late Henry Early. She also wrote "Heart Drops from Memory's Urn", (1852) and "The Stranger's Stratagem" or "Double Deceit", (1860), and other stories.

Miss Whittlesey married and located in Alexandria, Virginia, during the latter part of the war. She separated from her husband, and served as a nurse in a hospital in the Virginia city. Her husband, a Yankee soldier, was wounded and she nursed him during the few remaining days of his life. It was said that he never recognized her while he was a patient in the hospital. She died in the Virginia city, but her books are unknown in the library there.

The Library of Congress has copies of her books and other copies may be found in the rare book section in the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

About twenty years later, in 1886, one of the greatest writings on religion up to that time was published, covering a span from the Creation to A.D. 1885. Cushing Biggs Hassell, one of the most prominent men Martin County ever produced, started the history before the middle of the 19th century. He had had only four years of formal schooling, but he proved to be one of the best self-educated men ever to live in the county. The elder Elder Hassell died on April 11, 1880, and his son,, Elder Sylvester Hassell, one of the ablest educators in the state, revised and completed the "History of the Church of God from the Creation to A.D. 1885," including especially "The History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association".

The religious book, containing slightly more than one thousand pages, was praised as one of the greatest undertakings in the field of religion up to that time. Only a limited number of copies were printed, but quite a few are to be found in this and other Kehukee Association counties, including two of the originals owned by Enterprise Publishing Company. Turner Lassetter of Atlanta, Ga., republished the history two times, the first in 1948. Prior to 1971, Lassetter had sold all his books, and the old School Hymnal Company, Inc., Conley, Georgia, brought out a fourth printing of the voluminous book in 1973. The edition republished in Georgia is believed to be the only one available now in stores.

A Martin County native, Noah Smithwick, gained fame and wide acclaim among historians when he wrote a book, "The Evolution of a State" or "Recollections of Old Texas Days".

Used as a text book in the Texas public schools for years, "The Evolution of a State" is regarded as a reference bible by historians.

The son of Edward Smithwick, the author was born on January 1, 1808, apparently in what is now known as the Islands Section of Williams Township. He moved with his family from Martin County to Tennessee in 1814, locating near Springfield. The son drifted with the tide of emigration to Texas in 1827, remaining there until 1861 when he located in California. He first settled in Tulare County and later at Santa Anna, Orange County at which latter place he died on October 21, 1899, at the age of 91 years, 9 months and 21 days.

Members of good old revolutionary stock, the first Smithwicks came from England, purchasing land in North Carolina apparently in Chowan County as early as 1661.

Noah Smithwick's wife, Thurza N. (Blakely) Smithwick (prior to her marriage to him the widow Duty), was also a pioneer Texan. She died in 1871. Of their five children only two were living when the book was published. Edward, of Santa Anna, and Nanna Smithwick Donaldson who prepared a brief biographical sketch The book was reproduced in facsimile by Steck-Vaughn Company, publishers, Austin, Texas, in 1968.

James M. Day, general editor at the Steck-Vaughn Company, said in his introduction, in part: "Only seldom is a really important local history produced. One such Texas book is that by Noah Smithwick . . . It has virtually become a documentary source for the Republic of Texas. Smithwick was unschooled, but wise in the ways of the world, and he set down his thoughts with such zest that the reader is mentallly swept into the stream of his story...."

Martin Memorial Library, Williamston, has one copy of the book, a gift from Mrs. Della Smithwick Shawner of Rt. 4, Jacksboro, Texas. It was donated to the library in memory of Mrs. Shawner's grandfather, Thomas A. J. Smithwick, who was born in Martin County on August 3, 1829.

Stephen W. Outterbridge, an educator of note and a great patriot in this county, was referred to as an author on June 23, 1853, but no mention of his writings was noted at the time. However, there is some reference in the Bryant Bennett papers (Duke University) about Professor Outterbridge's unpublished booklet, "The Old North State". It is not known if the manuscript was ever published, and nothing can be learned about its contents.

In September, 1857, Judge Asa Biggs, numbered among the county's most prominent men, prepared "A Concise History of Martin County". The history was never published in book form, but the brief manuscript is in Martin Memorial Library, Williamston, along with his autobiography and other interesting sketches, all in book form but a bit fragile.

"The Watchtower", a religious publication, was published by Robersonville Herald, W. H. Mizelle, proprietor, back in the teens and most or all of the twenties. There are a few copies scattered around, but they are hard to find, one report stating that the volumes were never bound.

For more than two-thirds of a century there was no activity in the book-publishing field in Martin County. The poets then became active.

In 1953, the year he was graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Julian Mason, a Williamston boy, had published a collection of poems, called "Search Party". Mason was valedictorian of his high school class, and at Chapel Hill was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the Order of the Golden Fleece and Phi Mu Alpha, national music fraternity. The 50-page booklet is in various libraries.

Five years later, in 1958, Vernon Ward, Jr., a Robersonville youth, had published a 127-page booklet of poems, "Of Dust and Stars". On the way up the author worked at occupations as varied as seaman, farmer, laborer, school teacher, camp counselor, dance-hall operator, public relations man and carpenter. After leaving the county, he made his home at Pamlico Beach for several years. He attended Carnegie Institute of Technology, where he made the highest average in the Department of Architecture, and the University of North Carolina, where he received the first "A" ever awarded by Instructor Phillips Russell in creative writing. A former North Carolina State Secretary of the Socialist Party, Mr. Ward has written several political pamphlets, as well as a number of collections of poetry. His book was printed by Exposition Press, New York, and may be found in many libraries and hands of individuals.

A native of Martin County, Needham Christopher (Kit) Hines, authored "The Truth About Florida". The 99-page book was published in 1956 by Florida Research Press, Miami, and is dedicated to LeRoy Collins, then governor of Florida.

Reared in the Oak City area, Mr. Hines left the county as a young man about the turn of the century when he located in Raleigh. A widely known realtor, he also lived in Washington, D.C., before spending a few years in Florida. He returned to Washington where he died in 1968. Mr. Hines is survived by a daughter, a nursing home resident, and several nieces and nephews, including Mrs. Wilbur Barrett of Oak City. He was a brother to the late John W. Hines, well-known county man.

Needham C. Hines also authored "The Truth About Freeport-Lucaya, Grand Bahama", a 77-page book published in November, 1964, by Financial Press, Inc., 505 Northwest 54th Street, Miami.

Mrs. Barrett owns copies of the two books.

A break in the poetry run came in 1959 when Mrs. Thelma Smith of Robersonville had published a 52-page booklet, "A History of Robersonville Public Schools—1878-1959", (A Measure of Progress). Mrs. Smith, an officer in the Martin County Historical Society, is keenly interested in Martin County history. Her history of the Robersonville schools is most informative and interesting. A limited number of copies were printed, but they are in general circulation and in libraries.

A return to poetry followed the next year in 1960 when John Eber Manning, a native of Griffins Township, this county, issued three volumes of poetry, "Life and Poetry", each having about 75 pages. He dedicated one volume to his parents, Mary Elizabeth Jane

Manning and William Edwin Manning, another to Asa James Manning, and still another to Joseph Coachman Wardlaw. The author taught school in Arkansas, later locating in Georgia where he was connected with the extension division of the University of Georgia for many years.

In 1966 William Joseph Barber, a native of Jamesville Township, published the "Disciple Assemblies", a review of the early denominations in the county and section.

Mrs. Louise Robertson Booker, native of Williamston, had published a 130-page book, "Historical and Traditional 'Tar Heel' Stories", from the colorful Central Coastal Plains in 1968. The book is composed of about ten or twelve interesting stories. One of the Carolina Heritage Books, it was printed and bound by Johnson Publishing Company, Murfreesboro, N.C. The authoress in 1971 had published "Ghosts and Witches of Martin County", in which she relates the "tall" tales handed down over the years. The authoress has done much historical research in her native county and town during the years. Next to her last book was published by Enterprise Publishing Company in 1971, and the second printing has been sold out.

The first of the authoress' works, "Messages of Cheer", was in the form of poems, published in 1966. Her latest book, "Tales Along the Roanoke", is now in the book stores.

The next book in the county list was authored by the late W. Iverson Skinner, II, and is titled "Tobacco and Health, the Other Side of the Coin." Published in 1970, the 100-page booklet challenges many of the claims that have been offered by the anti-smokers. The author was a resident of Williamston just about all his life, and was in the tobacco business for forty years. He was president of W. I. Skinner Tobacco Company for a number of years until his death in 1970, and was a past-president of the Tobacco Association of the United States, he was also closely associated with other operations and agencies of the tobacco industry. Printed by the Vantage Press, New York, Washington and Hollywood, the booklet was of limited circulation, but a few copies are still available.

Established in 1878, "The Gospel Messenger", for years, was about the only publication to come off the presses, edited by a Martin County man, the late Sylvester Hassell, author, educator and churchman of note in the nation.. In addition to his work, finishing Hassell's Church History, he preached and edited the Messenger until a comparatively short time before his death in 1928. The Primitive Baptist Church paper was moved from Williamston to Luray Springs, Va., where Elder Lawrence edited for a number of years. The inscription on the booklet fly leaf follows: "The Gospel Messenger", established in 1878. Published monthly, $1 per year, Sylvester Hassell, editor and proprietor, Williamston, N. C. Motto: "Speaking the Truth in Love, Conducted for the dissemination of pure Scriptural and eternal truth". The monthly magazine is in a few libraries, and there are some copies scattered around the country, but they are believed to be rapidly disappearing.

One of the few major books ever published in the county is that of James H. McCallum's "Martin County During the Civil War", the most comprehensive document of the period in this county. Published by Enterprise Publishing Company in 1970, the 200-page book is recognized as a valuable source of information about the Civil War and the people and conditions in the county during that period. It was almost five years in the making, the author extending his research and work to hundreds of volumes, pamphlets and accounts. There was a second printing in 1972 and that supply is exhausted. The book sold all the way to California and is in many libraries across the country.

During the search for Martin County authors, the book "Five North Carolina Negro Educators" was found. The book takes on added significance since one of the contributors was a Martin County native, Rebecca Elizabeth Everett Keeys. A teacher in the Martin County school system for 38 years, Mrs. Keeys contributed to that portion of the book reviewing the life and works of Peter Weddick Moore, one of the book's five subjects. Published in 1939, the book now is a rarity.

Under the auspices of the Martin County Historical Society, the autobiography of Elder C. B. Hassell was published by Enterprise Publishing Company in 1958. The 24-page pamphlet is now out of print, and only a few copies are to be found. Publication permission was granted by Mrs. William R. Glover, a great-granddaughter of the late Mr. Hassell. It was written on December 6, 1840.

Written in 1857, the autobiography of Judge Asa Biggs, son of Joseph and Chloe Daniel Biggs, is informative and interesting.

A most informative publication is the one commemorating the centennial of the town of Robersonville in 1972. It is packed with pertinent data, pictures and stories. The 66-page pamphlet had Bonner Swindell Everett as its editor; Marvin McHenry Everett, (her husband), associate editor; Doris Little Wilson, associate editor; Doris Jenkins Keel, associate editor, and the Rev. W. E. Donovan, business manager. The commemorative booklet, printed by Herald Publishing Company, is still available in limited numbers.

One of the most extensive genealogical works, "In Memory of

Miriam," was prepared by Mrs. Edna Guilford Cook, a native of Robersonville. Mrs. Cook was working in Washington, D.C., in the late fifties and gathered genealogical data about families in Martin, Edgecombe and Nash counties, including Pippen, Mayo, Hyman, Jones, Cherry, Knight, Grimes, Brown, Boddie, Battle, Wheatley (Whitley), Alston, Llewellyn, Sherrod, Ballard, Williams, Powell, Bryan, Moore, Arrington, Baker, Slade, Gainer, Staton, Clements, Dawson, Best, Hilliard and possibly others.

The book, containing more than 200 pages, is a monument to Mrs. Cook's work in genealogy. A bound volume was placed in the Tarboro library, and portions of it were Zeroxed and bound by Enterprise Publishing Company for reference to those items relating to Martin County. Retiring from government service, Mrs. Cook located in Rocky Mount.

The only genealogy pamphlet ever printed in the county, as far as it can be learned, was the one prepared by the late J. Sam Getsinger for distribution at Christmastime in 1971. It is a fairly complete family history, dating back to the year of 1812. Printed by Enterprise Publishing Company for Mr. Getsinger, the pamphlet is already in short supply.

There are other brief histories of a few prominent Martin County families, but they were prepared by genealogists outside the county, including John Staton's "Staton History", Edna Guilford Cook's "In Memory of Miriam" Captain Haywood Robertson's "Robertson Family Review," and possibly others.

Then there are quite a few chamber of commerce folders about the county and towns, along with weather reviews, farm surveys and similar publications, including "Soil Survey of Martin County", by Perkins, "Martin County Water Resources" by Wyrick, and "Weather Data," a publication of the U. S. Department of Commerce, weather bureau. Susanna G. Fisher, daughter of a saintly father, Abraham Fisher, general manager of the old Jamesville and Washington Railroad and Lumber Company, wrote "Little Books for Little Ones," including a child's story of Jesus' friends, and Bible pictures and their stories in the 1880's. When Miss Fisher left Dymond City, out in Griffins Township, she located in Upper Darby, Pa. She was said to have authored several other Bible story booklets.

While not a native of this county, Morrison Myers, an educator in the county school system for a number of years and a resident of Jamesville, contributed to "A Time for Poetry", an anthology of the North Carolina Poetry Society.

"Windows of Life," one of the finer books of poetry and drawings, was authored by the late Maybell Barnhill (Mrs. William Hugh) Roberson in 1961. An accomplished artist, Mrs. Roberson drew the illustrations for the book. No copies are now available. In the brief biographical sketch, Mrs. Roberson explained she changed schools three times to be under the tutelage of her favorite teacher. The book is dedicated to her family, Hugh, Martha, William Hugh and Shirley.

A book of poems, "Whispering Voices", was authored by Myrtle Taylor Roberson in 1974. Privately printed by her son, Dr. Russell Roberson, Duke University nuclear physics department, and his wife, the 68-page poem collection is one of several books of poems written by Martin County people. Mrs. Roberson of Robersonville dedicated the booklet to her grandchildren, David, Michael and Mary Russell.

One of the latest books authored by a resident of Martin County is "The Silent Bell" by Elizabeth Cobb Williams (Mrs. J. L.) A native of Pitt County, Mrs. Williams has made her home in Robersonville for about 35 years. Autobiographical, the book, published in 1975 by Carlton Press, is being read with much interest in this section of the State.

One of the 1972 additions to the list of books authored by Martin County people is the "Book of Ideas" for ministers, church officials and church workers, by the Rev. Sam L. Whichard who was born and reared in the Bear Grass area. The Rev. Mr. Whichard is a prominent minister in the Pentecostal Holiness Church. Most interesting and informative, the 275-page book is a compilation of short articles, pertaining mainly to religious subjects.

"Me and the Spitter", an autobiographical confession by Gaylord Perry with Bob Sudyk, was one of major works by a Martin County man that year. The 222-page book is informative and makes for entertaining reading. The book, published in 1974 and rating international circulation, was printed in the United States and by Clarke, Irwin and Company in Canada at the same time. Bob Sudyk is a Cleveland sportswriter.

In 1974 Julian R. Rawls, Oak City native, prepared a concise but interesting history of education in Martin County. It has not been published.

A book, now in the hands of the publishers, "Religion and Education in Martin County", was prepared by F. M. Manning and W. H. Booker, and was scheduled for distribution the latter part of 1974.

"History of Everetts Baptist Church", one of the most complete church documents in the county, was written by Helen Keel Peel. Dedicated to the memory of the author's grandparents, Charles

Thomas and Willie Speight Peal, the book represents extensive research and great devotion. It was distributed during a special service in the Everetts Baptist Church on Sunday, August 25, 1974.

Dr. Martel J. Dailey published a tract dealing with hepatitis in 1974. Titled "The Blood and Uncle Ananias", the pamphlet centers mainly around a dialogue between the author and "Uncle Ananias" who talks about the problems resulting from the racial mixing of the blood for transfusion. Ananias died in the late summer of 1974, not too long after the conversation. The pamphlet, extensively researched, is informative and revealing. The booklet sells for $1 and the proceeds go to the American Hepatic Foundation.

Dr. Dailey also authored "The Liver in Health and Disease", a four-page publication of the American Hepatic Foundation published in 1975.

Another book of note produced in 1974 is "Cardiovascular Nuclear Medicine", co-edited by A. Everette James, Jr., Sc.M. M.D. Internationally known in his field, Dr. James Everette is a native of Robersonville, the son of Mrs. A. E. James, Sr., of Robersonville, and the late A. E. (Buck) James, Sr. He is currently associated with Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and was in London this year, lecturing and visiting various hospitals in England. The book is recognized as the latest and most extensive work on nuclear medicine and cardiovascular diseases.

While they were not written by Martin County men, there are two books centered on county families. One is "The Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross", by his son, James Ross, and the other is "The Bagley Family", by E. G. Bagley. There are copies of the original books in Martin Memorial Library, Williamston.

Short historical sketches, centered mainly on Martin County and some of its people, were written by the historian, John H. Wheeler, the late Wm. C. Manning, Sr., Harry A. Biggs and possibly others. County historical reviews have appeared in "State Magazine," Raleigh, from time to time over the years.

One of the most notorious books with a bit of Martin County flavor is "The Amazing Madame Jumel". The subject's mother, Phebe Clark, lived in Williamston about 1798. William Cary Duncan wrote the book, one of at least three related to the same subject.

In addition to the books and periodicals, Martin County has had a goodly number of newspapers, the first dating back to the 1850s. Most of the early editions have been lost to posterity.

The last in the series of books and pamphlets authored by Martin County people is the 140-page text book, "Grammar and the Language

Arts'' by Janice Hardison Faulkner, a native of Martin County. A member of the East Carolina University faculty, Mrs. Faulkner has roots going back 200 years or more in Griffins' Township, this county. The book was printed in 1975.

CHAPTER XII

NEWSPAPERS

There have been at least fifteen newspapers published in Martin County, the first dating back to June 9, 1855. Only two, "The Enterprise," Williamston, and "The Weekly Herald," Robersonville, survived the uncertainities of war, panics and distress.

Possibly in no other business were there more daring souls than those who ventured into the publication field in Martin County, especially the ones who started newspapers as far back as 120 years ago. There were few persons who could read and write. The economy was far from stable during many of the years. An effective postal system had not been established in the area at the time,, and it was not until the latter part of the 19th century that rural free delivery service was inaugurated. With limited distribution facilities and a near-poverty economy existing, it is understandable why most of the papers existed only during brief periods. And it can be well said that the two papers existing today in the county had their trials and tribulations, especially during depression periods.

In the early 1930s the Enterprise Publishing Company would close its doors and the editor and all other members of the force would go out in a horse and buggy, bicycle and an old model car, seeking subscriptions. The barter system was used, the publisher exchanging a 12 -month subscription for an old chicken or a bag of poor grade peanuts. Some of the chickens were eaten along with the peanuts, and others were sold. Anyway, the system helped pull the paper through the doldrums. There were no loans and the welfare program was barely in its infancy.

The first known paper to be published in the county was the "Roanoke Herald". Little is known about the paper and its tenure cannot be learned. The "Tarborough Southerner", in its June 9, 1855, edition, said: "We have received the first number of the "Roanoke Herald", a new paper, neutral in politics, published by Wm. S. Warrock, Esq., at Williamston in Martin County at $2.00 a year. It is very neatly printed and will doubtless be a useful vehicle of information for the people in that vicinity." Warrock was a medical doctor and practiced in the county during 1855 and 1856, at least.

The "Roanoke Herald" had a short life, but Warrock was back in the publication field before a year had passed. His second paper was the "Young American" which he sold to Augustus Moore and Joseph J. Martin. The new owners changed the name to "Democratic Banner" and the first edition of the paper appeared on August 7, 1856, under the new ownership. Moore and Martin said in the first edition of the "Democratic Banner": "A Hamilton man, name unknown, said he was chagrined because we have established a Democratic paper upon the ruins of a Know-Nothing paper, lately printed in this place (Williamston)."

Appearing first on August 7, 1856, the "Democratic Banner" is believed to have existed until late 1859, enjoying about the longest tenure of the early papers. It was not without its trials and tribulations, the "Tarborough Southerner" stating in its March 20, 1858, edition that the "Banner" had suspended for two months because it was unable to get a printer. It was also stated that William Brenan came down from Suffolk and bought one-half interest in the paper, apparently operating it until it suspended publication the latter part of 1859. Twenty-four of the original papers, preserved in Duke Library, were reproduced in March, 1974, by "The Enterprise". No other editions of the paper are known to be in existence.

Apparently before the "Democratic Banner" suspended operations J. H. Foy and A. S. Williams, editors and proprietors, and William B. Jasper, publisher, established the "Williamston Mercury" in early March, 1859. Foy apparently remained with the "Mercury" only a short time, reportedly going to Wilson in early June of that year. - Williams and Jasper suspended the publication of the "Mercury" on July 20, 1859. A goodly number of the papers, carrying much county history and other interesting data, were reproduced in March, 1974.

County newspapers were non-existent during the Civil War, and no mention of a local publication was made until January, 1866, when the first edition of the "Williamston Expositor" appeared. Abner S. Williams, associated with the "Williamston Mercury" for about five months and after a short stay in Tarboro where he edited the "Tarborough Mercury", returned to Williamston and started the "Williamston Expositor" on January 9, 1866. Apparently a short time after starting the "Expositor" Williams sold an interest in the paper to Sylvester Hassell, and on December 20, 1866, Williams sold the other half interest to a man named Askew. Only one copy of the "Expositor", Volume II, No. 2, January 16, 1867, has been found. It is not known how long the paper was in existence. It was reproduced along with several other old Martin County papers in March, 1974.

On June 30, 1870, R. L. Smith came to Williamston, employed Abner S. Williams and started the "Williamston Express". The "Tarborough Southerner", in its edition of that date said: "The inevitable 'Mike' Williams, of Williamston, is about to make another effort to float upon the waves of journalism, waves that have, to him, proved false and deceitful. We learn that he will soon re-commence the publication of a paper at that point. Politics doubtful." Starting in July, 1870, the "Express" lived only a short time, apparently. No copies of the paper are to be found, and little is known about it or R. L. Smith.

The "Williamston Spectator", the seventh newspaper published in the county, was edited by Taylor and Watts. Little can be learned about the paper and its editors. The publication is known to have been published in August, 1871, and that it suspended operations in January or February, 1872. The Watts mentioned is believed to have been Dr. William Watts or one of his relatives.

Apparently the county was without a newspaper from 1872 until October 13, 1882, when the first issue of the "Martin County Times" was published by Dennison Worthington and W. Z. Morton, county attorneys. The last known copy of the "Times" was dated April 20, 1883.

Little is known about it and there is some doubt if an issue was ever printed. The "Tarboro Southerner", in its November 22, 1883, issue had the following to say: "Brother Bromell, of Williamston, will shortly start a new paper at Hamilton, to be called the 'Record'."

The tenth newspaper mentioned in Martin County was the "Williamston Echo", published by W. C. Mayo. Little is known about the publisher and only one copy of the paper has been found. Addressed to Jeff D. Ray, late of Williamston, the paper was No. 26 of Volume 2, dated October 15, 1886.. That edition was reproduced along with several other county newspapers in March, 1974.

About five years later the "Martin County Sun", published and edited by Howard J. Herrick, Sr., appeared in January, 1891, running for about 38 weeks. The senior Herrick had two children, Howard J. Herrick, Jr., and Virginia Herrick, living in Richmond at the present time. He came from the North to study under Professor Sylvester Hassell, married in the Lamb family and made his home in Williamston a number of years. Although a bit mutilated, one issue of the paper was reproduced in March, 1974.

After spasmotic attempts, dating back to 1855, newspapering in Martin County took on a permanent stance, more or less, on September 27, 1899, when the first issue of "The Enterprise" was published in Williamston. It was the 12th newspaper mentioned in the county.

Jonathan Dale, a Pitt County man, started "The Enterprise" in the latter part of 1899, when he loaded a two-horse wagon and moved the equipment to Williamston, including an old Washington hand-press. Returning to Williamston on July 22, 1912, Mr. Dale explained that he sat up shop in the old Williams building, just east of Courtney Furniture Store. The paper's masthead was carved from a block of wood.

No copies of the early editions are known to exist today and the names of the owners and editors in those uncertain days are not now known. It is apparent that George William Newell bought the paper and edited it until its sale to Alfred E. Whitmore presumably in 1900 or early 1901. Mr. Whitmore is listed as owner-editor in the January 24, 1901, edition, the earliest edition of the paper now known in existence. The George William Newell mentioned died on June 19, 1904. Believed to have come to Williamston from Granville County, George William Newell was a brother of S. Atwood Newell, a prominent attorney in Williamston at the time.

When Alfred E. Whitmore bought the paper around 1900-1901, he modernized the shop and located it in the Jos. Biggs store where the Bank of Martin County was to be built some months later. While the bank building was being constructed Whitmore located in a building across Smithwick Street now occupied by Alpha Cleaners. Moving into the new brick bank building and occupying just about the back half of the structure, Whitmore is believed to have installed a Campbell printing press, said to have been used by one of the Richmond, Va., newspapers during or soon after the Civil War.

Concerning its equipment, the following item appeared in the August 5, 1904, issue of "The Enterprise":

"We have at last secured that new press. We are now fitted up to do any kind of printing. 'The Enterprise' print shop always had a good name for printing; we are now in a position to make a greater reputation along that line. With a gasoline engine, two-revolution job and book press and two platen job presses, we can turn out work with any of the print shops of the country.

"We are a little later this week with our paper than we wanted to be; this is due to getting a foundation under our press.

"We ask the support of Martin County, both in our job and newspaper department. We will meet all legitimate competition in the job line and guarantee you as good work as you can get anywhere.

"We intend to furnish a newspaper in keeping with the times and solicit your subscriptions."

By March, 1905, the paper apparently experienced difficult times, and a stock company was the publisher. On March 3, 1905, S. Justus Everett was listed as editor and S. Atwood Newell was business manager. Alfred E. Whitmore was listed on March 17, 1905, as manager in charge of the printing department of the Enterprise Printing Company. Don Godwin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben F. Godwin, worked for the paper a short time but left on March 23, 1905, for the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. 'Godwin later attained one of the highest naval ranks ever bestowed upon a Martin County man.

Financial reverses were experienced the early part of 1905, when S. Justus Everett, a local attorney, was made editor. Old issues show the Enterprise Printing Co. entered into the hands of a receiver voluntarily and temporarily. Everett edited the February 10, 1905, edition which was produced by John Walton Hassell, foreman, Miss Bessie Latham and Don Godwin. Whitmore was the editor of the February 3 paper that year.

S. Justus Everett continued as editor for almost a year. He was succeeded on March 2, 1906, by Chas. Hassell, son of Sylvester Hassell. The young man, whose widow now lives in Washington, D.C., held the editorship until June 2, 1906, when W. L. Smith came to Williamston from Elizabeth City to edit the paper. His tenure was limited to eight or ten weeks. After August 24, 1906, Smith's name does not appear as editor. In fact, no name appeared on the editorial masthead for more than two months. On November 6, 1906, Alfred E. Whitmore, a former editor, was listed as the holder of the position. Mr. Whitmore continued as editor through November 13, 1908.

A portion of the time while Mr. Whitmore owned and edited "The Enterprise," his brother, J. Harry Whitmore, was associated with the paper. That was about January 6, 1905. J. Harry Whitmore came to Williamston from Chatham, Va.

On October 30, 1908, Alfred E. Whitmore announced he would not continue with the paper after November 13, 1908. He left and went with the Parkersburg, West Virginia, "Sentinel." On August 6, 1946, it was learned that the man who had piloted "The Enterprise" during those early hectic years, had died a few days previously in a hospital at Arlington, Va.

After serving as Martin County Register of Deeds for ten years, William Christian Manning, Sr., retired from active politics, purchased "The Enterprise" from the Enterprise Printing Company stockholders and edited his first issue on November 20, 1908. John W. Hassell, a young Williamston man who served as an apprentice with the paper, was associated with Manning in publishing "The Enterprise," until 1911, when the young man removed to Tennessee. He enlisted for service in World War I there and attained the rank of lieutenant. He was the first Martin County man to lose his life in action in World War I.

Fred M. Shute succeeded Hassell at the paper. Coming to Williamston from Roanoke Rapids, Mr. Shute remained with the paper several years, marrying a local young lady, Mary Dare Brown, during the meantime.

Printers came and went in those days, and publication schedules varied as many as two days at times. The late Maurice S. Moore, Sr., helped out in emergencies. Miss Victoria Fowden, later Mrs. Robert Everett, was a mainstay at the old handset type case. Miss Hattie "Scrap" Thrower handled the women's column and much of the current news. The editor's young son, Francis Marion Manning, was moving from the ground on up in the mechanical department, and was recognized as one of the paper's press feeders.

The paper was powered for years by an old gasoline engine, and after cranking it enough to go around the world once and maybe twice, the young press feeder was regarded as one of the best engine crankers in these parts. When the youngster was not busy at the paper, he was pressed into service as a telephone lineman, working from Parmele to Plymouth.

Although well established, "The Enterprise" rolled and rocked through the World War I period, experiencing delays caused by shortages, extremely cold weather, sickness and deaths.

It was in 1918 that Harry Jones came to Williamston and took over the mechanical department. An Intertype, a mechanical typesetter, was installed February 21, 1919. On March 14, 1919, the paper started publishing twice each week on Tuesdays and Fridays. Jones left abruptly in May, 1920, and Walter H. (Jack) Booker succeeded him a short time later. Booker, with Simon Lilley, Sr., handled the equipment and a lot of paper. The business manager, W. C. Manning, Jr., saw an empty building at 106 West Main Street. The two-story building was purchased immediately, and "The Enterprise" was moved into its new home there on August 1, 1927. Although badly crowded even after an addition built in the sixties, the paper has maintained residence at the 106 West Main location since the move in 1927.

Following the 1929 crash, the paper was soon in another crisis. By the early thirties, the owners would close the office doors and go out searching for subscribers. The elder Manning drove a horse and buggy, and invariably picked up more chickens than the two sons. It was later learned that the elder Manning carried along a few grains of corn and a hooked wire. The business manager drove a worn-out Ford and the youngest son rode a bicycle with a basket at front and rear. An old hen was good for a year's subscription to the paper. The three gathered hundreds of chickens. Reserving a few for their hungry stomachs, the three would sell the remaining ones at a periodical poultry car, operated under the direction of Farm Agent T. B. Brandon. The management also accepted a bag of farmers' peanuts in exchange for a 12-month subscription to the paper. Hundreds of subscriptions were gained about 1933, the mailing list was maintained, the hungry were fed and enough cash was gained to help tide the paper over another crisis.

Just before the start of World War II an order was placed for a new Cox-O-Type web perfecting press. The order was delayed by the war and delivery was not effected until 1946. Contractor Hugh Wyatt prepared the pit and foundation, and the Rev. Ira Knight, pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, was the unofficial observer at the installation of the eight-page automatic press.

During the meantime, the editorship of the elder Manning came to an end with his death on January 3, 1938, closing a tenure of more than 29 years. Having grown up with the paper over the years, his youngest son succeeded him in the editorial post, but he continued at the news desk and all over the mechanical department.

Gilliam and Parker started the Windsor News-Leader in 1929, and the Enterprise Publishing Company acquired that paper in early 1930, later selling it to Parker Brothers of Ahoskie. Jack Booker, as a partner in the Enterprise Publishing Company, handled the Windsor paper until it was sold to the Parkers.

The Enterprise Publishing Company bought the Roanoke Beacon in Plymouth in early fall of 1930, and Booker transferred to that operation, moving to Plymouth in 1942 after commuting for a number of years. The partnership with Booker was mutually dissolved in December, 1955, Booker receiving the Beacon, the other properties going to the two Manning sons.

Death struck The Enterprise mechanical force in 1945 when Floyd E. Bufflap and his young son were drowned at Edenton. D. Lee Reynolds joined the force at that time, working his way up to news editor of the paper in 1971.

Enterprise Publishing Company purchased the Robersonville "Weekly Herald" in March of 1931, and the two operations were combined.

Dallas Coltrain, a Griffins Township young man, joined the paper in 1954 and following the death of the business manager, Wm. C. Manning, Jr., in June 1960, he was made advertising and business manager.

Booker sold his Plymouth holdings in 1957 and located in Mt. Olive, where he operated a commercial shop until November, 1960. He returned to Williamston and was employed by the Enterprise Publishing Company, working in the mechanical department and later as paste-up man for the paper right up to his death in 1976.

Working as a partner with the late W. C. Manning's widow, Sallie A. Manning, the fast-aging younger son had a big decision confronting him in 1969. The decision was made by early spring that year and arrangements were made for a change from hot to cold type. A 16-page Goss-Miehle-Dexter offset Community press was installed and placed in operation in October 1969.

Troubled and worn out by the change-over, Francis M. Manning gave serious thought to complete retirement along about that time, but held to the news desk and editorial page until January, 1971, in his 69th year. He turned the news desk over to D. Lee Reynolds and Dallas Coltrain was made general manager. While holding to the editorial page, Francis Manning went into semi-retirement, switching over to the preparation of a county history and a bit of fishing at every opportunity.

Along with its forerunners, "The Enterprise" and the Robersonville Weekly Herald over the years struggled to keep alive, working for the advancement of all the county and its people.

It is known that Miss Hattie (Scrap) Thrower edited the "Eastern Carolina News" in Williamston in the early 1900s. However, it is believed only a few editions were published. As far as it can be learned there are no available copies.

Robersonville's first newspaper made its appearance on or about the last of January or early February, 1903. Only one copy, Volume I, Number 24, is known to be in existence, and that copy is badly mutilated. The copy bears the date of July 31, 1903.

Charles F. Hunter, an ordained Methodist minister, was the editor of the "Weekly News" and also the "Wesleyan Advocate." It is assumed the "Advocate" was also published in Robersonville at the time, but little or nothing is known about that publication.

Hunter was born in Hillsboro 1861, and was about 42 years of age when he started the "News" in Robersonville and managed the Advocate Publishing Company. He was educated in the schools in Hillsboro and was in the printing and publishing business at Durham fourteen years before starting the "Weekly News" in Robersonville.

The paper of July 31, 1903, was in the form of a progress edition, and listed the businesses and prominent men along with a word picture of Robersonville.

The late Stephen W. Outterbridge, then 79 years of age, prepared an article for the 8-page edition. It reads:

"We design to make brief mention of our village so as to give it a place on the municipal page of history. Over a quarter of a century ago it sprang from nonentity and became incorporated; it merged from the pristine state when it lay bare except plantation cottages with the surrounding of wheat, corn and cotton in common with this whole section of the country. Here was the place of holding militia musters for military drill in conformity to law in those days, also for holding the polls of election of this precinct; all on the premises of Henry D. Roberson. His fruitful orchard afforded means for traffic on such occasions. In process of time he entered on the mercantile line on a small scale which eventually grew to a higher scale of success. At length other stores were added and the population increased and soon our energetic H. D. Roberson used means to have it incorporated including the neighboring farm cottages of his two brothers, William and George, and Staton Everett. The town then consisted of one street with a line of trees transplanted on each side; now called Main Street, which is beautifully arched with extended elm limbs and boughs making a dense shade. His indomitable energy did not stop at this point consequently he began using his energy and enterprise to get a railroad line through here by the way of Tarboro on to Williamston. Eventually he succeeded by patient perseverance and it is said, when he saw the first engine speeding its way on this road he shed tears of joy, the outcome of a bounding heart of gratitude and self complacency. Teacher after teacher having been employed at short intervals, indicating our permanency, so needful in intellectual training, from the fact of the barking and howling incident to that or any other enterprise which should be disregarded as the cur and now allow base influences to supplant the higher element, by unity of the latter to subdue the former. About eighteen years ago a board of trustees was organized and a teacher employed of over 30 years experience at a salary, since which time the school has been permanent and self sustaining and the town has been gradually building up and street after street added."

In July, 1903, the paper listed Stephen L. Ross, mayor; J. K. Ross, A. S. Roberson and R. L. Smith, town commissioners, the latter serving as secretary and treasurer. Joseph Bullock was listed as the only policeman.

Professor C. H. McLaurin was the high school principal.

J. J. Gentry was proprietory of the Southern Warehouse, Robersonville. W. H. Adkins, J. H. Taylor and R. A. Bailey operated the Taylor Warehouse. J. C. Andrews and J. W. Ferrell were the Carolina Warehouse proprietors.

R. E. Grimes operated a brick yard, offering a brick that is large and in good shape. Brick manufacturing was one of the latest new industries in Robersonville at the time.

Among the business firms listed in Robersonville in 1903 were: J. H. Roberson and Co., R. L. Smith and Co., J. C. Robertson's soda fountain, A. S. Roberson and Co., G. D. Roberson and Sons, Peal, Smith and Co., (J. L. Peal and J. C. Smith, D. R. Chandler was a third partner), H. M. Butler, S. L. Ross and Brother, Bailey and Barnhill, and J. C. Robertson, a native of Pitt banker.

Ministers listed were: D. J. Rose, Baptist; W. B. Humble, Methodist, and R. L. Tingle, Disciples. The doctors at the time were R. H. Hargrove and R. J. Nelson.

A. R. Dunning was a young attorney in the town.

Efforts were made to reproduce the old paper, but it was found to be too fragile for handling.

The Robersonville "Weekly Herald" is the second oldest survivor in the county's newspaper family, maintaining a continuity from 1914 to the present.

The Herald was founded in July, 1914, by C. F. Outlaw, W. H. Mizelle and C. B. Mashburn, editors-publishers. The company also published the "Watch Tower," an organ of the Disciples of Christ. The "Watch Tower" was originally "The Carolina Evangel," edited by Pendell Bush in Wilson. Mizelle later became the sole owner and editor of both the "Weekly Herald" and "Watch Tower."

"The Enterprise," in its issue of July 17, 1914, said:

"The first issue of 'The Weekly Herald,' pubished by the Robersonville Publishing Company at Robersonville, Martin County, has been received. It has a neat appearance is newsy and carries many attractive advertisements of the business men in the town, which shows that they are behind the paper and have confidence in the town and their ability to serve the public with every kind of merchandise.

"We welcome heartily this addition to the press of the state and county. Its appearance speaks strongly for the progress of the town of Robersonville and the county, and its influence must mean much for the uplift of the section in which it will circulate through the year."

Referring to "The Weekly Herald" and the "Watch Tower," "The Enterprise" concluded: "These two publications show better evidence of the forward movement in the county."

About that time Robersonville Publishing Company, the organizers Outlaw, Mizelle and Mashburn, equipped the printshop with modern machinery and type, including a Model 14 Linotype and a drum cylinder printing press. The business was located on Robersonville's main street in the Hargrove buliding next door to the telephone office and almost directly across the street from Stonewall Masonic Lodge.

The original partnership was of comparatively short duration, and Mr. Mizelle became the sole owner and editor of both publications.

World War I hampered the operation of the papers, and the itinerant printers came and went rapidly, leaving the equipment in poor shape in many instances. But Editor Mizelle held to his post and maintained the operation until his death on October 11, 1928.

"The Watch Tower," falling behind its publication schedules, was abandoned, and attention was centered on "The Weekly Herald." Following Mr. Mizelle's death, his widow and a daughter, Miss Hazel Mizelle, maintained the publication schedule with the aid of two of the brothers.

In 1931 the business was sold to the Enterprise Publishing Company, the purchaser maintaining an agent in Robersonville while the mechanical operation was handled in Williamston. The late William C. Manning became editor, and his son, W. C. Jr., was made business manager while his brother, F. M. Manning, handled the news desk. Mrs. Lillian Johnson continues as the society editor. The elder Manning died on January 3, 1938, and his younger son moved up to the editorial post. W. C. Manning, Jr., died in June, 1960, and Dallas Coltrain succeeded him as business manager. The news desk was turned over to D. Lee Reynolds when the younger Manning son went into semi-retirement in January, 1971.

Few copies of the early editions of "The Weekly Herald" are to be found now, but continuous files are available from 1935.

C. B. Mashburn, a Christian minister, was with the "Watch Tower" only a short time. C. H. Outlaw, pastor of Robersonville Christian Church, was not listed as a co-editor of the "Watch Tower" after March, 1915, leaving the post to William Henderson Mizelle. The masthead of the “Watch Tower” stated that the paper was founded in 1872 by John T. Walsh.

When Robersonville Publishing Company was sold, “The Enterprise” gathered up a fairly complete file of “Watch Towers” and had them bound into four volumes.

The last short-time newspaper in Martin County was started the latter part of 1926 by A. B. Wallace and his brother-in-law, Hector Lupton, now associated with the “Chowan Herald”, Edenton. Wallace, a Belhaven man, worked on the “Weekly Herald” earlier in the year and started the “Robersonville Times”. It existed only a short time, possibly no longer than early 1927. No copies of the paper are available and little is to be learned about its history.

CHAPTER XIII

PHYSICIANS-SURGEONS IN MARTIN COUNTY

(Martin County over the years has had many doctors, and in this review of those dedicated men it is fitting to use an introduction written by the late Warren H. Biggs in 1945. Since that time additional data on Martin County doctors have been found in scattered old records and they are being added to the review. The reader is asked to bear in mind the time the Biggs story was written. It is offered below in its entirety, followed by new research data and the completion of the review.—Editors).

A Brief Sketch of the Medical Profession of Williamston and Its Vicinity From 1780 to the Present

By Warren Biggs

Even with the miracles being performed by the medical profession in a period of war today, the information concerning the early years of the medical profession as practiced in Martin County seems a miracle itself. The doctors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries moved in a period of superstition and general ignorance of the people, limited in their knowledge, and struggling in their profession for the relief of humanity against the great god of pain. Pain was at that time something to be borne, to be conquered, instead of quietly subdued. Although some of the drugs were the same then as today, made from the same herbs, they were used in a crude state and manufactured by hand. The frail women evidently met battles of sickness with the same spirit that they pioneered the lands. Denistry, surgery and the fields of the general practitioner were in the embryo stage. Medicine was in the making, and many fields were to be explored before it obtained a position worthy of the profession.

In 1791, Dr. Thomas Marryat, M.D., had published in Bristol, England, a medical book entitled "The Art of Healing" that was used in this country. Professing himself to be interested in the cheapness as well as in healing, Dr. Marryat advised the layman of that time for such diseases as melancholy, King's Evil, jaundice, hysterics, and mortification. For melancholy he wrote, "Generous wines may be drunk freely as mountain, red port or Maderia. Also try the most nourishing diets consisting of all sorts of shell fish, every species of wild fowl, especially grouse, partridge and pigeons." Bleeding was advised for the cure of headaches, the juice of dandelions for jaundice, and carrot poultice for cancer. For hysterics, he wrote, "If the head is affected, let it be shaved."

In 1800 there still abounded in this section, as in other sections, superstitions that would hamper any doctor in his practice, especially if that doctor, reared in the beliefs himself, had a tendency to accept with the people the "cures" that had been handed down from another period. Many of the people ate their meals in silence, believing that conversation interfered with digestion, and from Kentucky came the superstition that a hemp string tied around the big toe would cure a "cold". Although the citizens may have disregarded some of the superstitions just as they disregarded their belief in the witches, in 1918 all classes of people in the town of Williamston tied asafetida and camphor "balls" around their necks to ward off influenza. So it is that the tearing down of superstition and the building of a scientific medicine has been a gradual process, involving many men in the past one hundred years and more. Some of these men came into the county for a brief time, and as quickly come were gone, whereas others stayed to leave their mark on the general progress of the town of Williamston and community. Some of the doctors have achieved success outside the county, and one has been cited many times for bravery, but there have been others known only to the community who spent their span of life administering to the ill, forgetting any fame that there might be in an outside world.

Facts pertaining to these men are not numerous, as no record has been kept. The information in this article is obtained from private sources, from old prescriptions, from any record that the individual doctor kept of his memoirs. There are, of course, some historical facts concerned with the development of the State.

On the 24th of March, 1663, King Charles II granted to the Lord Proprietors that section of America between 31 and 36 degrees parallel of latitude and called it Carolina in honor of himself. The same year Governor William Berkeley of Virginia, one of the Lords Proprietors, appointed William Drummond, for whom Lake Drummond in the Great Dismal Swamp was named, Carolina's first governor. At this time there were only about four thousand inhabitants in all of North Carolina, only a few cattle, and eight hundred hogsheads of tobacco.

The first assembly that made laws for the State was held in 1669. Most of the inhabitants were on the northern side of Albemarle Sound, centered around what is now Perquimans, Pasquotank and Camden counties. The settlers confined their habitation closely to the water as water was their only means of transportation. These settlements gradually extended westward up various rivers, especially the Roanoke which divided Tyrrell and Bertie counties.

Tyrrell County is situated on the southern side of Albemarle Sound directly across from the original settlement. On account of the proximity of Tyrrell, it was soon filled with large planters who located their farms on the streams and soon extended them to that part of the area which is now Martin County. The Hamilton, Smithwick, Hunter, Williams, Slade, Biggs, Griffin, and Ross families, along with a few others, located in the Martin section up and down the banks of the Roanoke River. All of them became large planters. This was during that period of 1725 to the Revolutionary War. These planters constituted quite a large personnel in the way of families, farm hands and laborers, and all being located near the rivers and swamps there was a great deal of sickness, especially malaria, which necessitated a great deal of medical care. There was of course some method of caring for the sick during this period, although there are no records of any practicing physician throughout this section until the coming of Dr. M. E. Sawyer just after the Revolutionary War.

Dr. Sawyer, who was a resident of northeastern Carolina, paddled a canoe across Albemarle Sound to the tip of Tyrrell where he would mount his horse, take his saddle bag that contained the medicine, and ride up the southern side of the Roanoke, visiting all these plantations and administering to the families and slaves. He continued through Martin County to Hill's Ferry, then he crossed the Roanoke and made the same kind of trip through Bertie to Capehart. He made several of these trips a year. In 1831, Dr. Sawyer published a treatise on "Disguised and Misplaced Fever in North Carolina" to which the following reference is made:

"In the beginning of the winter, in the year 1792, that fever was very fatal in the county of Martin, near the river Roanoke: the river had been lately very low and much of the muddy bottom and other grounds usually covered with water, had been exposed to the sun."

He also discussed in his treatise two epidemics of influenza that occurred during his practice of medicine. In the spring, preceding the epidemic of flu in the fall, wrote Dr. Sawyer, there was always a terrible eruption of some big volcano in some part of the world. He said that the eruption from the volcano polluted the waters of the globe, going into every river and stream, and that these polluted waters were the casue of the influenza.

With the formation of Martin County in 1774 and the incorporation of the settlement called Skewarkee into the town of Williamston in 1779, the influential citizens of the community, Thomas Hunter, Col. William Davis, Gen. Jerimiah Slade, Edward Yellowley and others, procured the services of Dr. John Dashwood,, a young physician recently graduated in the city of Boston who was on a visit to Gen. Samuel Simpson in Pitt County. He located in Williamston about 1785 and practiced until his death on March 21, 1792. He is buried on the brink of the river hill. A slate stone erected at the time is still standing in his memory.

The next physician of which there is any record is Dr. George A. Farris who practiced here about 1810-1825. He was closely followed by Dr. George W. Robertson who practiced all during the twenties and was in turn followed by Dr. James B. Slade who began his practice here about 1830. He was a member of the large Slade family that was headed by William Slade and Gen. Jeremiah Slade. Dr. Slade had a very large practice throughout the community but removed to Georgia about 1840 to continue his practice. At the beginning of the Mexican War he volunteered his medical services to the government for the entire two years of the war. Returning home by New Orleans, he contracted yellow fever to which fever he succumbed.

Dr. J. H. Burnette practiced in Williamston approximately from 1835 to 1850. He built and occupied the house of the Wilson G. Lambs, corner of Smithwick and Academy streets, and operated the Joe Cherry farm located on the Hamilton Road.

One of the greatest characters that ever lived in the town was Dr. Levy Smithwick Yates. He began his practice between 1835-1840 and practiced continually with a partner or alone until the 1880's when he retired to private life and spent his time looking after his farms. He was married twice, his second wife being Mrs. Louise Biggs, the grandmother of James G. Staton.

His skill was demonstrated by an incident that occurred some time after the Civil War. He was called with Dr. Jordon of Jamesville to see a man who was injured in the log woods of Dymond City. Both men went empty handed, so far as instruments for surgery were concerned, but they found the injured man, Llewellyn Whittaker, with a crushed leg that necessitated immediate amputation. Mr. Hyman Peele was sent to the nearest house where he got a butcher knife and a handsaw. After sharpening them, he carried the "instruments" to the doctors. The three men proceeded to take the man's leg off in the woods. Mr. Whittaker resumed his work after a brief passage of time, and residents now living in Williamston recall his activities as a fish dealer for many years afterwards.

During Dr. Yates' practice, quite a number of physicians were also in the county for brief periods of time, some of them becoming the partners of Dr. Yates. During the 1840's and the 1850's the community was served at various times by Drs. T. H. Wingfield, J. H. Smith, Abner Williams, W. W. Watts, D. E. Lee and S. P. Allen. Beginning in 1848 there was Dr. Hawkes who practiced with Dr. Yates for a number of years.

Dr. Abner Williams was a local man and was the son of Amelick Williams, the family having moved here from Pasquotank County quite a few years prior to the Civil War. Their descendants are quite numerous here now.

Dr. William W. Watts, son of Thomas W. Watts, belonged to one of the oldest families in the county. He was the brother of John Watts and Judge Samuel Watts, and he was the grandfather of J. Wigg Watts who died December 25, 1976. Dr. Watts practiced medicine here until he moved to Hamilton where he practiced until his death.

Dr. Thomas C. Pugh located in Williamston in the early 1850's, coming from Bertie County. He practiced here continuously until the 1870's when he removed to Baltimore and entered the commission and produce business. Dr. Pugh lived in the home of Elder C. B. Hassell and was considered practically a member of the family. Dr. Pugh allowed S. R. Biggs, Sr., who was then a young man, to handle his drugs, and that was the beginning of Mr. Biggs' long career as a druggist.

Dr. Alonzo Hassell and Dr. Taylor were associated after the Civil War. Dr. Hassell was graduated from the University of Maryland Medical College about 1870, and practiced here until his death on April 8, 1888.

Dr. R. S. Halsey was engaged in practice in 1878. Also in 1878 there was a Dr. J. M. Murrell. Dr. Ed Eurell and Dr. Sam Cherry both died shortly after they started their profession here. Dr. Thomas Burbank came to Williamston from Washington, N.C., about 1880 and practiced here for eight or ten years when he moved to Wilmington where he became one of its leading surgeons. The last two or three years that he was in Williamston he was associated with Dr. W. H. Harrell who was graduated from the Medical College of Virginia about 1883. After the death of Dr. Hassell, Dr. Lewis H. Reed, an old Confederate Army surgeon, came to take his place. Dr. Reed practiced here successfully for two years, then moved to Rocky Mount. From Rocky Mount he went to Rome, Ga., where he practiced until his death.

Dr. Harrell, who had been associated with Dr. Burbank, then made his office in Biggs' Drug Store, where he practiced until his death in 1905.

In 1891 Dr. J. B. H. Knight, a native of Wake County, located here and practiced for thirty-three years or until his death on September 29, 1924. He and Dr. Harrell were for a period of twelve or fourteen years the only physicians in Williamston. Then in 1904 Dr. William E. Warren came from Pitt County and practiced alone for a while, associating with Dr. Harrell the last year of Dr. Harrell's life. Dr. Proctor was also here for a short time about 1905. The year after Dr. Harrell's death, Dr. James S. Rhodes, who was graduated in 1906 from the Medical College of Virginia, became associated with Dr. Warren, both having offices in Biggs' Drug Store for about twenty years. Dr. J. H. Saunders graduated the year before Dr. Rhodes and located in Everetts, Martin County, where he remained for about a year, then came to Williamston and formed a partnership with Dr. Hugh York with offices in Jeffries' Drug Store which had just been opened. This partnership continued for about one year. Both men practiced successfully until they died, Dr. York on August 30, 1929, and Dr. Saunders on August 3, 1939.

Dr. Grover C. Godwin practiced medicine in Williamston in 1920-1921. He was later medical director for the American Viscose Corporation at Front Royal, Va.

Dr. Godwin, the son of Benjamin and Emma Wentz Godwin, was born in Williamston on June 19, 1892. He attended local schools, Oak Ridge Military Academy and the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond, graduating in 1915. He was engaged in public health service from 1915 to 1920. From 1922 to 1936 he was on the staff of the U. S. Veterans Hospital, Oteen, N.C., from 1936 to September, 1937, he was on the staff of the Hines General Hospital, Chicago. From September, 1937 to 1940 he was engaged in special work in tuberculosis at the State Sanatorium. In 1940 he became associated with the City Sanatorium, Roanoke, Va., as superintendent and medical director, also acting as city health officer until 1944 when he accepted his present duties. Dr. Godwin married Miss Annie Beth Purvis of Martin County and they had two sons, one of whom is serving in the armed forces.

Dr. W. H. Harrell, Jr., returned to Williamston in 1919 immediately after the World War. He was associated with Dr. Rhodes in 1919 and 1920. For twenty-three years he was a member of the medical corps of the Navy, and in the world conflict he won renown for his bravery and skill in the service at the naval battle of the olomous.

Dr. J. A. Eason came to Williamston in 1933 and was associated with Dr. Rhodes until his death in December, 1938. He was a graduate of the Medical College of Virginia.

In 1936, Dr. W. C. Winn became associated with Dr. Eason and Dr. Rhodes for about two years. Since leaving Williamston in 1938, he has been associated with Dr. Ware of Richmond as a specialist in obstetrics.

Dr. R. G. McAllister came to Williamston in 1936 and was associated with Dr. Eason until Dr. Eason's death, then with Dr. Rhodes until 1942 when he returned to Richmond.

Dr. Rhodes' next associate physician was Dr. J. T. Llewellyn who stayed in Williamston from 1939 until 1942. Both Dr. Llewellyn and Dr. McAllister entered the medical services of the armed forces. Dr. Llewellyn returned to Williamston after the war.

Dr. W. F. Evans came to Williamston about 1936 from Richmond Hospital where he had served his internship after graduation from the Medical College of Virginia. Prior to his study of medicine he had graduated as a civil engineer from the University of Virginia and had worked for four years in that profession. He left Williamston in February, 1938, for a year's study in several of the leading medical schools of the country. He achieved success in his profession and in World War II he rose to the rank of Commander in the medical corps of the Navy.

Dr. V. E. Brown formed a partnership with Dr. Saunders in 1938. Eighteen months prior to his coming to Williamston he had been associated with the Tayloe Hospital in Washington. He is a native of Greensboro. He studied at Wake Forest and completed his medical training in Pennsylvania. After the death of Dr. Saunders he built Brown's Community Hospital where he practiced until his death.

Dr. E. T. Walker came to Williamston in August, 1939, and for six years he engaged in general practice. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas Medical School, the class of 1937. Prior to this he had received his degree in pharmacy. His internship was at Roper Hospital in Charleston, S.C. He came to Williamston from Chapel Hill.

Even with Mr. Biggs' data and that found in other research projects, there are quite a few gaps in the sequence of doctors who practiced in Martin County, and the dates are uncertain in some instances.

In the "Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross", it is stated that Dr. James Wheatley (Whitley) was regarded as being one of the county's first citizens. It is possible that Dr. Wheatley was in the county during the latter part of the 1700s. It could have been that he preceded Dr. Dashwood, but nothing has been found to determine the date.

The next mention of a doctor in Martin County is found in Bagley's family history. A Dr. Cushman came to Williamston from Vermont shortly before 1809 when he married 14-year-old Elizabeth Gray, a local girl. He died in 1814.

While Dr. George A. Farris was practicing in this part of the county, Dr. Buck Ward located in the Oak City area. Tracing old homes in the county, Mrs. Edna Guilford Cook, an able genealogist, states that Dr. Ward built a home about three miles from Oak City about 1810. Nathan Turner owned the place later and it was sold about 70 years ago to Ebenezer Turner. It is referred to as the Turner place, now occupied by Ruel Turner.

After Dr. George W. Roberson in 1820 and Dr. James B. Slade in 1827, the next doctor on record in the county was Dr. Simmons J. Baker. He was graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1825 and indications are he practiced medicine in the county about 1831. The Rocky Mount Telegram says: "Simmons J. Baker, Martin County physician, was the first president of the North Carolina Institute of Education, 1831-1834...." William G. Kornegay made reference to the item in the N. C. Historical Review.

During the early years of the county and on down to and for some time after the Civil War, much of the medical practice was centered around the plantations, mostly in the upper part of the county. The late Warren H. Biggs says that possibly as many as five doctors lived between Hamilton and Palmyra at one time.

Following Simmons J. Baker in the line of doctors, Dr. J. H. Burnett, after practicing apparently on a plantation in the upper-county area, located in Williamston between 1835 and 1840, practicing for almost 20 years, dying or leaving the area prior to the Civil War. He built a sizable home on the corner of Smithwick and Academy streets. The house, occupied by the Wilson G. Lamb, Sr., family for many years was torn down, and the lot is now occupied by Mrs. George H. Harrison, Jr.'s, home.

Nothing can be learned about him, but the Tarboro Press in its September 8, 1838, edition, says Dr. William Henderson died in Williamston on Friday, August 17, 1838, that his widow survives.

There was a Dr. Jordon in Jamesville in the 1830s-1840s.

The Tarboro Press on May 7, 1842, said that a Dr. George Cobb was a candidate to represent Martin County in the next legislature. Apparently he did not win, for there is no Dr. George Cobb listed as being a representative from Martin County during that period.

Eleven doctors were listed in the 1850 U. S. Census for Martin County. The list included Drs. Abner Williams, William T. Armstrong, P. C. Madina (Maderia), H. H. Winfield, a native of Virginia; John Sherrod, 25, son of John J. Sherrod, wealthy county planter; Willie J. Armstrong, 30; Edward Glase, 56, a native of England; George C. Sills, 32; Hampden Sydney Williams, 25, whose body is buried on the road from Hamilton to Palmyra; Levi S. Yates, 33; Jesse S. Smith, 35; Samuel C. Benjamin, a native of New York, who married Mary Rives; J. H. Burnett, P. P. Clements, Edward Glasgow, George C. Suggs, and T. H. Wingfield.

Other doctors in the county about that time were: Thomas Pugh, William S. Woodward, L. C. Coke, Perry, Lewis, Whitfield, Teel, Jones, Thomas Burnett and James S. Hawks. Records show that Dr. Hawks practiced with Dr. Yates in 1848. Scattered records found in personal papers show that there are other doctors in the 1840's and 1850's in Martin County, including W. W. Watts, D. E. Lee and S. P. Allen.

The Dr. Thomas C. Pugh was born near Hamilton on October 16, 1837, and died in Baltimore in early January, 1912. He earned his medical degree at University of Pennsylvania when he was 21 years of age. He returned to the county in 1858 and practiced until after the Civil War, serving as an assistant surgeon and later as a full surgeon. Soon after the war he located in Baltimore. He was married to Florence Kingsbury of Oxford and they had three children, Mrs. J. O. Preston, Mrs. David Usher and Thomas C. Pugh, Jr.

Dr. William S. Warrock practiced in the county about 1855. He started the "Roanoke Herald" in Williamston on June 9, 1855, and "The Young American" on August 7, 1856.

A Dr. Cloman was referred to in the "Democratic Banner" on February 7, 1856.

A Tarboro paper indicates that a Dr. S. C. Benjamin of Hamilton was a candidate for the N. C. General Assembly in the middle 1850s. There is no record that he was elected.

Elder C. B. Hassell recorded in his diary on January 21, 1859: "Dr. Chas. H. Knight came to town and located this day."

The "Williamston Mercury" on April 5, 1859, referred to Dr. Joseph J. Anthony of Hamilton.

Apparently there were few medical doctors in the county dring Civil War days. It is likely that Drs. Levi S. Yates, L. C. Coke, (J.?) Sherrod and William W. Watts were in the area about that time.

Little can be learned about doctors in Martin County during the Civil War other than the four mentioned above. The known doctors practicing in the county from 1867 until at least 1872, according to the North Carolina Year Book, included: R. S. Halsey, Thomas C. Pugh and L. S. Yates, Williamston; L. C. Coke, William W. Watts, and John W. Sherrod, Hamilton; James L. Teal, country (possibly Colley Swamp area between Everetts and Robersonville).

Three new doctors were in the county in 1870, including John W. Moore and W. T. Paul, the latter living in the home of the first John D. Biggs. Then there was 19-year-old Dr. Joshua Taylor who lived in the home of Humble D. Taylor, a 21-year-old lawyer. Joshua Taylor was associated with Dr. Alonzo Hassell at one time. Jesse Jolly Smith was listed in the 1859 Year Book as a practicing physician in Jamesville. Dr. Smith was a practicing physician in Jamesville according to the 1850 U. S. Census.

The 1877-78 N. C. Year Book listed the following doctors in Martin County: L. C. Coke, W. R. Carson, D. W. Lewis and William W. Watts, Hamilton; R. S. Halsey, A. Hassell, J. Taylor, J. M. Murrell and Levi S. Yates, Williamston; Thomas Watson, Robersonville, and F. M. Morgan or F. M. Morbin, Jamesville. The names of Dr. Ed Eurell (Ewell) and Dr. Sam Cherry were found in other papers showing the two also practiced in the county in 1878.

Reference to a Dr. Joseph T. Ware in Martin County was found in personal papers in Duke Library under date of April , 1877. No other mention of the doctor has been found.

Edna Guilford Cook, in her "In Memory of Miriam", says Dr. James Staton practiced in Hamilton about 1880. He was the son of Burt and Jane Pippen Staton, that he married his cousin, Della Staton, daughter of the John Staton and Virginia Staton of Stantonsburg, Va., and that they had two children, James Staton who never married, and Selma Talitha Staton who married Walter E. Deal. After Dr. James Staton died, his widow married Dr. Ben Long.

It is fairly certain there were quite a few doctors in the county in 1880 but the U. S. Census for that year lists only the following: Alonza Hassell, Joshua Taylor, Williamston; R. H. Hargrove, Robersonville, J. W. Sherrod and Wm. W. Watts, Hamilton; Uriah S. Hassell, Jamesville. References found in personal letters, dated in or about 1880, mentioned the following doctors who practiced in the county at that time. B. L. Long, Hamilton; D. W. Lewis and William R. Carson, Goose Nest; N. Taylor, Lucian C. Coke, E. T. Speed, Joshua Hassell (?), John A. McDonald, F. C. James and R. L. Halsey. No addresses are mentioned, and some of the latter group could have resided in other counties and practiced in Martin.

The next references to Martin County doctors were found in the Tarboro Southerner. On October 25, 1883, the paper referred to Dr. Thomas S. Burbank. A native of Washington, Dr. Burbank came to Williamston on or about that date. The paper mentions his location as Hamilton. He came to the county from Wilmington soon after he was licensed to practice. He was referred to as one of the most popular physicians ever to practice in Martin. He was married to Mamie Lippitt of Wilmington and they had three children, Mrs. Eugene LaGrand and Miss Reslie Burbank. Following the death of Dr. Wood in Wilmington, Dr. Burbank returned there and died on June 12, 1915.

The Tarboro paper in its December 13, 1883, edition said "Dr. W. D. Pender has moved from Edgecombe County to Robersonville and formed a partnership with Dr. Hargrove."

On May 14-17, 1883, Henry J. Clark and Benjamin L. Long were licensed to practice at Hamilton. B. L. Long was listed in 1880 as practicing there. He apparently "made rounds" during certain periods of the year while in medical school and interning between 1880 and 1883.

The next mention of a doctor was on May 20, 1885, when Dr. William H. Harrell, Sr., was licensed to practice in Williamston. A year later on May 18, Dr. Charles R. Gurken was licensed to practice in Jamesville.

The Tarboro Southerner said on August 8, 1889, "Dr. Louis H. Reid has an office in S. R. Biggs' drug store, Williamston.

The 1890 N. C. Year Book listed the following Martin County doctors that year: W. R. Carson, Henry J. Clark, (Son of Gov. Henry T. Clark), Lucian C. Coke, B. L. Long, D. W. Lewis and J. W. Sherrod, Hamilton; Chas. R. Gurkin, W. C. Hassell and U. S. Hassell, Jamesville; Robert Hargrove, Robersonville; W. H. Harrell, Sr., and Levi S. Yates, Williamston. The listing of W. C. Hassell in Jamesville that year apparently was in error.

Dr. J. Burke H. Knight reported for practice in Williamston in 1892.

The News and Observer reported on November 1, 1893: "Dr. W. R. Mayo married Mary E. Mizelle in Jamesville on October 25, 1893."

The following doctors were added to the county list by the 1896 N. C. Year Book: H. J. Clark, Palmyra; Hargrove and Nelson, Robersonville; J. B. H. Knight, Williamston; J. C. Jenkins, built an office in 1894, Everetts; L. R. Ricks, Parmele; W. R. Mayo, Jamesville.

James E. Smithwick, Sr., listed among the county's ablest country (horse-and-buggy doctors), was licensed to practice in Jamesville on June 7, 1897.

A personal news item in 1897 read: Among those attending the wedding of W. Henry Crawford to Pattie Hardison in Williamstonon February 24, 1897, was Dr. Brown of Everetts. No other mention of the Dr. Brown has been found.

Dr. L. R. Ricks was practicing in Parmele on April 29, 1898, a correspondent for "King's Weekly", Greenville, stating that the doctor was building a very neat office near the Parmele-Eccleston Lumber Company commissary there. Ricks was in Parmele as late as 1902. He left, possibly a short time later, for Fairmont to continue his practice there.

A personal in The Enterprise said: Dr. R. J. Grimes and Dr. B. L. Long visited in Hassell in June, 1901. Dr. Long was from Hamilton. It is not known where Dr. Grimes was from, and little or nothing is known about him now.

The 1902 N. C. Year Book listed the following medical doctors in the county at that time: W. H. Harrell, J. B. H. Knight and William E. Warren, Williamston; R. J. Nelson, Everetts; R. H. Hargrove and R. J. Nelson, Robersonville; B. L. Long and M. L. Justice, Hamilton. Dr. Justice located in Hamilton on May 9, 1901, according to a story in The Enterprise on May 17, that year.

In January, 1901, Dr. Henry J. Clark moved from Hamilton to Scotland Neck. On May 22, 1901, John Irving Hocutt was licensed to practice in Everitt (Everetts).

Dr. J. Peebles Proctor was licensed to practice in Williamston on May 23, 1903. After practicing in Williamston until about September, 1905, he moved to Athens, Ga. Dr. Walter B. Pollard was licensed on June 3, that year, to practice in Hamilton.

A personal in The Enterprise, June 5, 1903, stated that Dr. Napoleon B. Marriner, an uncle of Dr. James E. Smithwick, Sr., returned the night before from Hot Springs. After practicing in Jamesville a comparatively short time, Dr. Marriner located in Belhaven. Dr. Marriner was licensed on June 3, 1903.

About the same time, Dr. W. B. Hess was mentioned. He was said to have visited Everetts with W. T. Crawford and H. W. Stubbs.

In 1903 and 1904, Dr. L. C. Skinner was practicing in Parmele.

Dr. Courts practiced in Everetts during 1904. Everetts news, appearing in the September 2, 1904, edition of The Enterprise read: "Everetts is now in want of a good energetic physician, Dr. Courts having abandoned this place on account of being disabled to practice." Everetts apparently was without a doctor until July, 1905, when Dr. Joseph Hubbard Saunders of Washington went there to practice. In 1908 Dr. Saunders located in Williamston where he practiced until his death in 1939.

When Dr. J. B. H. Knight refused to accept the nomination for Martin County coroner on the Republican ticket in October, 1904, J. A. Castle was named for the position. It had been customary for years to have doctors handle the duties of the coroner. It is not known if Castle was a doctor.

Writing for a paper on June 30, 1905, a Hamilton correspondent said: Dr. Major Fleming of Greenville will soon move to Hamilton and open an office on Main Street.'' Little is known about the doctor.

On May 29, 1906, three doctors were licensed to practice in Williamston, including Hugh B. York, James Slade Rhodes and Reuben A. Lloyd. Lloyd was the first colored doctor to practice in the county. He figured prominently in the profession for many years. Other doctors practicing in the county at that time, according to N. C. Year Book were: Wm. E. Warren, Williamston, and J. E. Smithwick, Jamesville. Others have already been mentioned.

Drs. Hugh B. York, James S. Rhodes, Sr., J. B. H. Knight, Wm. E. Warren and R. L. Lloyd, Williamston; R. H. Hargrove and R. J. Nelson, Robersonville; B. L. Long and M. I. Fleming, Hamilton, were listed as practicing in the county in the 1907 N. C. Year Book.

The 1908 N. C. Year Book listed, among others, Drs. J. Peebles Proctor, Williamston; J. H. Saunders, Everetts; V. A. Ward, Robersonville. Dr. J. E. Ward was listed in Robersonville in 1909. Licensed in June, 1909, Dr. Edgar M. Long, son of Dr. B. L. Long, was listed in Hamilton that year. The Longs formed one of the several father-son medical teams ever reported in the county. The other team was Dr. James S. Rhodes and son, James S., Jr.

Soon after his graduation from Johns Hopkins, Dr. John W. Williams of Washington located in Everetts in 1909. Ten years later he went to Monroe, La., and headed the public health department, moving to Asheville eight years later. He returned to the county in January, 1940, and headed the public health department until his death.

Licensed in June, 1914, Dr. Chas. Roebuck of Poplar Point, practiced in Bear Grass and other parts of the county for a number of years before going to Colerain. He is retired now and makes his home in Colerain.

In 1915 Bear Grass built an office for Dr. Roderick M. Buie and John N. Rogers erected a home for him. Dr. Buie practiced there until he entered World War I, serving overseas two years. After the war he returned to the county and made his home with the Jim Peels in Everetts until he moved to Duke, Harnett County, April 22, 1921.

Dr. Grover C. Godwin was licensed in June, 1915, and practiced in Williamston, his native town. He also was associated with a facility in Chicago. Returning to Williamston he served as Martin County health officer for several years before retiring.

A Dr. O'Hare was reported to have located in Hamilton during 1918. Apparently, he did not practice in the county town very long.

In August, 1918, Dr. A. R. Bell, osteopath and ear, nose and throat specialist, maintained an office each Tuesday and Friday in the old Martin County Bank building, corner of Main and Smithwick streets, Williamston.

Dr. William H. Harrell, Jr., was licensed to practice in Williamston in June, 1918. He was in the military, rising to the rank of Medical Captain in the navy. His father was a prominent Williamston physician who began practice in 1885 and continued until his death in 1905.

Martin County medical doctors reached their greatest number in 1922, the N. C. Year Book listing 15 that year, as follows: J. S. Rhodes, Sr., Jos. H. Saunders, H. B. York, Wm. E. Warren, Grover C. Godwin, W. H. Harrell, Jr., J. B. H. Knight and R. A. Lloyd, Williamston; B. L. and Edgar M. Long, Hamilton; E. E. Pittman, Oak City; R. J. Nelson, V. A. and Jesse E. Ward, Robersonville; James E. Smithwick, Sr., Jamesville.

Dr. George N. Harrell, Hamilton, was listed in the 1931 Year Book.

Dr. Chas. J. Sawyer, Sr., of Windsor, maintained a part-time office in 1923 in the York Building now occupied by Heilig-Meyers on Washington Street. He later practiced in the Dr. J. H. Saunders office near the post office.

In April, 1931, Dr. F. S. Whitaker of Kinston located in Williamston, occupying the office of Dr. Wm. E. Warren in the old Farmers and Merchants Bank. Dr. Warren died in early April, that year. Dr. Whitaker was in Williamston only a short time.

It was announced about the same time that Dr. A. L. Denton of Castalia would locate in Williamston within ten days. Little can be learned about Dr. Denton, and it is not certain he ever located in the town. If he did, his stay was of short duration. An office was prepared in the old Martin County Bank building corner of Main and Smithwick streets, the one now occupied by Attorneys Peel and Peel.

Dr. Joseph A. Eason, Williamston, was listed in the 1935 Year Book. He practiced here until his death a few years later.

The Year Book listed Drs. W. T. Gibson, Jamesville, W. F. Evans and W. C. Winn, Williamston, in 1937. Dr. Victor E. Brown came here February 1, 1938, and started the county's second known hospital in

1939 on West Main Street, Williamston. He owned and operated the hospital until his death on January 15, 1960. At the time, he was making plans to build a second hospital.

Dr. E. W. Furgerson came to Williamston in 1939 and opened the county's first independent health department. Dr. R. G. McAllister joined a partnership with Dr. J. S. Rhodes, and Drs. Winn and Eason in 1939. Dr. J. T. Llewellyn joined the firm in 1941, but was soon off to the military for a tour of duty.

Dr. Edward L. Early, Jr., the county's second colored physician, opened an office on Washington Street in the early forties, and practiced until his death in 1950.

Dr. Walter Elliott Ward returned to Robersonville in 1941 and continues his practice there. He was in the military from August, 1942, until January, 1946. At one time he was a member of the Ward partnership, Dr. Vernon A. Ward, Sr., and two sons, Vernon, Jr., and Joseph. They formed the only definite three-member medical partnership from one family in the county.

Younger doctors started relieving their elders in the forties. Dr. J. S. Rhodes, Jr., and Chas. I. Harris, Jr., located in Williamston in 1946. Dr. Joseph Ward started practicing in Robersonville in 1950, moving to Greenville in 1961. Dr. G. G. Himmelwright, a native of Newport News and a popular surgeon, located here the same year, 1950. He was a partner in the Williamston Clinic, until he entered the semi-retired group in 1974.

Dr. L. H. Wynn, the county's third colored doctor and an able one, too, started practicing in Williamston in February, 1957, later constructing a sizable clinic, corner of Pearl and Wilson streets.

Dr. Victor Ng, a native of China, started practicing as a member of the Ward Clinic in Robersonville in 1961. He later built an office and began specializing in acupuncture, serving patients from an extensive area.

Dr. W. Jesse Highsmith, Jr., of Mount Olive and later of Plymouth, started practicing in Hamilton on August 16, 1951, and practiced there until March, 1961, when he returned to Plymouth.

Dr. J. H. McCallum, a recognized pediatrician, located in Williamston in 1962, going with the Williamston Clinic partnership. He later built Children's Clinic on the Boulevard between McCaskey Road and Highway 17. He was among the first if not the first specialist in that field in the county.

Dr. Daniel Clark, an Everetts native, practiced in Robersonville with Dr. Walter E. Ward and Dr. Ng for about two years in the sixties. He left the county to further his studies in radiology.

Dr. Martel Dailey, an able general practitioner and researcher, located in Williamston on August 21, 1963, and maintains an office on South Smithwick Street in the building constructed by Dr. E. T. Walker.

Dr. J. H. Hong came to Williamston in January, 1973, practicing until November of that year, when he moved to Pinetops.

Dr. Frank Sheldon, Virginia native, came down from New Jersey in March, 1973. Dr. Abdel Mogazi located in Williamston in July, 1973, as a gynecologist-surgeon. These two doctors, with Dr. Himmelwright, form an able trio or surgeons at Martin General Hospital.

No record can be found now, but two young doctors located in Williamston about the early thirties, maintaining an office in the rear of the old Martin County Bank or Lawyers' Building on South Smithwick Street. They practiced in the town only a short time.

The latest additions to the county's medical family include: Dr. Marcelo L. Mora of Ecuador who began practicing in Robersonville in January, 1976, and Dr. Kenneth Banks of Edenton who joined the staff at Martin General. Dr. Banks is the fourth member of his race to practice in Williamston.

In bringing the review of the medical profession in Martin County to a close, some mention must be made of the latest developments. Dr. Joseph Waldo Griffin, Jr., a Williamston young man, successfully passed the required examinations in June, 1974, and is now a "Diplomate in Internal Medicine." He is now in Georgia.

Receiving his medical degree at Duke in three years, Larry Barnes of Robersonville is now interning in Ohio.

Graduated from the University of North Carolina medical school last May, Dr. Clarence Lloyd, Jr., is now interning at New Hanover Memorial Hospital, Wilmington. A Williamston native, he is a great nephew of the late Dr. A. L. Lloyd. There never was a greater parent-son combination than the one that existed between the Lloyds. The son worked and his parents struggled to see him through the schools. The late father peddled his way around on an old bicycle, giving of his all to help prepare his son for a better way in life.

Quite a few Martin County men have made marks in the medical profession over the years in other states. A. Everette James, Jr., a Robersonville native, has moved up in the world as a renowned specialist in the field of nuclear medicine and cardiovascular diseases.

Dr. Richard Myron Margolis, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Margolis and a native of Williamston, after finishing the local high school studied at William and Mary. He transferred to Chapel Hill where he spent two years before going to Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio. He specialized in pediatrics at Bowman-Gray, Winston-Salem, and practiced in Charleston, S.C., a short time before locating in the Florissant Medical Center, St. Louis.

Another county man, Dr. Lee A. Clark, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Clark, studied in Chapel Hill eight years before he entered the Air Corps for a two-year tour of duty. He then specialized in opthamology at the University of Virginia, before locating in Wilson.

Dr. Catherine Everett Goins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Everett, Robersonville, spent four years at Duke before going to Chapel Hill where she spent four more years and received a degree in medicine. The second white female from this county to earn a degree in medicine, Mrs. Goins is now (1977) working for a degree in radiology at the University of North Carolina Medical School.

The first young white woman from this county to earn a medical degree, Dr. Beth Spivey Hoyt, is the daughter of the late V. J. and Esther Harrison Spivey. After finishing Williamston High School, she studied at U.N.C., Greensboro, two years before entering and earning a medical degree at the University of North Carolina. After interning at Medical College of Virginia, she joined the medical staff at Dorothea Dix Hospital, Raleigh, working with the elderly. She is married to Allen Hoyt, whose father, Frederick Hoyt, was a native of Williamston.

Dr. Connie Ange, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mack Ange of Williamston, is one of the few early Martin County young women to enter the medical profession. After studying at Wake Forest three years, she went to the Chicago Osteopath School for four years. After interning at Grandview Hospital, Dayton, Ohio, she moved to Cincinnati where she is now (1977) specializing in psychiatry. Dr. Ange spent six weeks last year in South Africa observing operating room techniques there.

Dr. Edward Everett Boone, son of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Boone of Robersonville, studied at Wake Forest and earned a degree in internal medicine at Bowman-Gray. After a residency at the University of South Carolina, Charleston, he is now practicing in Hickory.

Dr. Jarrett Barnhill, son of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Barnhill, of Robersonville, did his undergraduate studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and earned his medical degree at Bowman-Gray, Winston-Salem. He is a resident in psychiatry at Chapel Hill.

Dr. Russell Williams, Jr., of Robersonville, was graduated from Robersonville High School in 1961, and earned a degree in internal medicine at the University of North Carolina Medical School in

1969. He interned for four years at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. Stationed in Hawaii with the army for two years, he is now practicing in Blacksburg, Va. He is married to the former Joyce Moore, formerly of Bazoria, Texas.

Dr. Chandler Smith, son of Judge and Mrs. J. Calvin Smith, late of Robersonville, earned a medical degree and is now practicing in San Francisco.

Dr. Rudolph Bunch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Willie Bunch of Williamston, earned a degree at Meharry Medical School and is in general practice in Hampton, Va. Dr. Bunch is one of several from the minority group in this county to receive a medical degree.

Dr. Rodney Gaither, son of Mrs. Alma D. Gaither of Williamston and the late Rufus Gaither, was graduated from Meharry, Nashville, Tenn., and is now with Rex Hospital, Raleigh. He is another in the minority group from this county to earn a medical degree.

Another member of the minority group in this county, Dr. Edward Boston, of Robersonville, received a medical degree from Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tenn., and is now practicing in Norfolk.

A minority group member and son of Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Parker of Rt. 1, Oak City, Dr. James Eugene Parker has attained a high rank in the medical profession. A neurologist, Dr. Parker has practiced in Long Beach, Calif., for ten years. He was graduated from high school in Oak City, attended A. and T., Greensboro, for four years, earning his medical degree at Yale. He is co-owner of a pharmaceutical house in California, manufacturing drugs. One of four children in college at the same time, the doctor always finds time to return to his native soil to visit his parents and other relatives.

Another Martin County native, Dr. Wallace Fleming, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Fleming, late of Jamesville, was graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia. He practiced in Elm City until his retirement about 1975.

One of the first Martin County men to earn a degree in psychiatry, Dr. Jesse Peel, son of Mr. and Mrs. Woolard Peel of Everetts, was graduated from Robersonville High School, and earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he interned. After a tour of duty in the military, Dr. Peel was a member of the medical staff at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., before going to Atlanta where he is now associated with Brawner Hospital, engaging in private practice.

Formerly of Williamston, F. L. Fussell, Jr., was graduated from the medical school at Chapel Hill where he interned before establishing himself for practice in Roanoke Rapids.

Another Martin County man, Dr. William Green, is now practicing in Whiteville, but he is contemplating retirement. He was graduated from Robersonville High School, studied at Wake Forest College and earned his medical degree from a medical school in Chicago before locating in Whiteville.

Dr. Garland Gray, a Robersonville native, moved up into high ranks in the medical field of the U. S. Navy before his retirement not too long ago. He was educated at Atlantic Christian College, Wilson, took his pre-med work at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and earned his medical degree at the Medical College of Virginia. He spends much time each summer in his home town, helping out in the hospital there.

A minority group member, Winnie Willis, of Jamesville attained a coveted position in the health field out in Michigan. Following her formal education in Jamesville she attended the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she earned a degree in public health service nursing. She is now a member of the medical staff at the Ann Arbor university.

Another former Williamston resident, Dr. Jack H. Welch, has made a name for himself in the medical field. A native of High Point, he moved with his family to Williamston in 1947 and was graduated from the local high school. After serving four years in the Navy, he studied at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he earned his medical degree in 1963. He interned at the University of Kentucky Medical School and engaged in private practice in Lexington, Ky., from 1966 until 1970. A recognized anesthesiolgist, he is chief of staff of Pitt County Memorial Hospital, Greenville. He is married to the former Jean McLawhorn, daughter of Mrs. D. C. McLawhorn of Williamston and the late Mr. McLawhorn.

Based on its centennial booklet published in 1972, the following review of the medical profession in Robersonville goes in detail relative to the activities there:

Dr. James L. Teel practiced medicine near Colley Swamp between Robersonville and Everetts. He is listed in the Martin County directory, issued in the late 1860s. Little is known about the man but his home and office were on the John A. Powell farm on Highways 13 and 64.

The next medical doctor to practice in Robersonville or area was Dr. William H. Watson. He was born in Edgecombe County about 1830, and first practiced in Bertie County where he married Sallie Speller. Moving to Martin County about 1870, he lived near the country home of John A. Powell, apparently not far from the spot where Dr. James L. Teel had lived, a short distance east of Robersonville. In 1881 he and his family moved nearer to Robersonville, building a home on the eastern edge of the town on three and one-half acres of land purchased from Tim Roberson. Dr. Watson died about 1890 and his widow and children sold their property and moved away.

During the latter years of Dr. Watson's practicie, Dr. Robert H. Hargrove, born about five miles from Tarboro on March 21, 1855, located in Robersonville about 1879, after getting his medical degree from the University of Maryland, and completing his internship at Bellevue Hospital. He practiced in Rocky Mount for two years. An able physician and a great community leader, Dr. Hargrove required four horses to move him over the area. He built the first brick store in Robersonville, and laid the first concrete sidewalk in the town. He purchased one of the first automobiles in the county, a two-passenger vehicle which was shipped in by rail, the manufacturer sending a representative from Chicago to instruct the doctor in its operation. Dr. Hargrove was 68 years of age when he died in 1923.

Robersonville's next medical doctor was Dr. Robert J. Nelson who was born near Bethel on January 11, 1865. After receiving his medical degree from Louisville Medical College in 1890, he practiced medicine in Bethel a year before locating in Robersonville in 1892. A partnership was formed with Dr. Hargrove at the time and it lasted until 1908. In 1893 Dr. Nelson moved to Everetts where, in addition to his private practice, he did contract work for the State, the railroad, and McNaughton Lumber Company, maintaining his partnership with Dr. Hargrove in Robersonville. After a residence of five years in Everetts, Dr. Nelson returned to make his home in Robersonville in 1908 and he formed a partnership with Dr. Jesse E. Ward. It was this partnership that built the first drug store in the town and installed a soda fountain therein.

Dr. Jesse Ward, born in Greene County on July 22, 1882, was the next Robersonville practitioner. Earning his medical degree from the University of Maryland in 1904, he located and practiced four years in Harrellsville, Bertie County, where he met and married Nancy Scull. Recognized as a capable country doctor of the horse and buggy days, he bought his first car, a Model T, in 1911. He died in 1950.

Born on January 8, 1885, Dr. Vernon A. Ward, Dr. Jesse Ward's brother, was the next in the line of venerable doctors to locate and practice in Robersonville. Graduated from the University of

Maryland and Jefferson Medical College, he interned in Wilson in 1908, and began practicing at Bethel in 1909. A year later he was married to Elizabeth Jones, and in December, 1913, they moved to Robersonville where he and his brother formed a partnership. In 1914 the doctors built on Main Street an office which has been used continuously since that time by medical doctors and dentists. In 1924, Dr. Vernon Ward went to Greenville as the first radiologist for Pitt Community Hospital, but he returned to his favorite town a year later to continue his work at the same old stand. He died August 3, 1965.

The next generation of Ward physicians and the first to return to his native town was Dr. Walter Elliott Ward who was born in Robersonville on January 28, 1916. After completing his education and earning a medical degree at Medical College of Virginia, he joined his doctor father and doctor uncle, forming a partnership in 1941. World War II interrupted the partnership while the young doctor served in the U. S. Army Medical Corps until 1946 when he returned to the partnership, remaining active as a practitioner after the deaths of his father and uncle.

Another second member of the second generation of Ward doctors to locate in Robersonville was Dr. Joseph Ward. Born on July 21, 1924, in Greenville, he was graduted from Duke Medical School in 1948, and following his internships at Martinsville, Va., and Rex Hospital in Raleigh, he joined his father, uncle and brother in the practice of medicine in Robersonville in 1950. War again interrupted the partnership, and the youngest of the group went to the Korean conflict. He returned to Robersonville and continued his practice in the town until 1961 when he located in Greenville.

Six months after Dr. Joseph Ward left the town, Dr. Victor Ng, a native of China, moved to Robersonville and formed a partnership with Dr. Walter E. Ward. The elder Dr. Ward did not join the partnership, but he continued active in his medical work. Dr. Walter E. Ward and Dr. Ng, by mutual agreement, ended their partnership in 1970, but continued their work at the clinic and hospital, built in 1956.

Dr. Daniel Clark, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Clark, was born in Everetts, and joined the Walter Ward-Ng partnership in Robersonville in the middle sixties. A talented physician, he ended his practice two years later to further his studies in radiology.

While Robersonville, like so many other towns and places, only had a limited number of doctors over the years, the people there and in the area have been blessed with able and willing ones, ones who remained willing at all times to relieve pain and suffering, to aid those in distress and lessen the anxiety of those in time of uncertainties and strain.

While their places of residence have not been officially determined, it is thought that a Francis Ward came over from England and settled on Welch's Creek, possibly on the plantation commonly known as Stewart Hamilton's, prior to 1742. Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas, volume 2, says, in part:

"The Ward family has furnished prominent physicians . . . for four generations."

Extensive research shows that a Francis Ward was register of deeds for Tyrrell County in 1742, 1755-58, 1770-1773, but no where was the title of doctor given his name. He was referred to many times as Francis Ward, Sr., Esquire.

It is assumed he lived at one time in what is now known as Martin County, that he was instrumental in getting a bridge built over Welch's Creek. The cyclopedia says he practiced in what is now known as Plymouth, and the indications are that he lived west of Welch's Creek and got the bridge built to hasten travel from Martin to Plymouth. Francis Ward, Sr., had a son, Francis Ward, Jr., and he practiced medicine in Plymouth. His place of birth is not known. However, Francis Ward, Jr., had a son, Dr. William Hardison Ward, who the cyclopedia says was born in Martin County at Ward's Bridge in 1817. William Hardison Ward, the fourth generation member of the Ward medical family, was born Janaury 3, 1857, and practiced in Plymouth. He died on November 9, 1930.

It is believed that all the Ward doctors practiced in what is now known as the Dardens area in Martin County.

DENTISTS

Martin County has had at leat twenty dentists, as far as it can be learned. At the present time there are five practicing dentists in the county.

Medical doctors handled dental duties before the regular dentists appeared on the scene.

The first mention of a dentist in Martin County is found in Elder C. B. Hassell's diary. On January 12, 1847, he referred to a Dr. W. F. Báson. The elder also referred to a Dr. Redding in 1852 and Dr. A. E. Ricks in 1855.

Dr. John B. Godwin is mentioned in an old Williamston paper as a practicing dentist in 1870.

During the remainder of the 19th century nothing has been found about dentists in Martin County.

Dr. John D. Biggs, a Williamston native, appeared on the scene about the turn of the century when the profession was stabilized in the county. Dr. Biggs practiced until 1905 when he sold his equipment to Dr. James A. White. Dr. Biggs quit the profession and ventured into the business world. Dr. White practiced in Williamston quite a few years before retiring and locating on his farm near Scotland Neck.

The North Carolina Year Book lists a Dr. W. G. Andrews as a prcticing dentist in 1902, and a Dr. Frank Staton in Hamilton the same year. In 1903 there was mention of a dentist, a Dr. Matthews, going from Norfolk to Hamilton to do dental work for a few weeks.

The next mention of a dentist was in 1916 when Dr. M. P. Manning located in Robersonville as the town's first full-time dentist.

Dr. P. B. Cone came to Williamston in 1916 and practiced on the second floor of the old Farmers and Merchants Bank until his death in 1934. Dr. W. C. Mercer bought the Cone office and continued practice there until his death.

Dr. J. Marshall Kilpatrick located in Robersonville on May 1, 1923, and practiced there until his death in September, 1968. Declining health forced him to limit his practice and he specialized in orthodonics, the first to enter that specialized profession in the county.

Dr. James Lawson Spencer, his folks closely identified with Hyde County, came to Williamston in 1934 and practiced until 1941 when he located in Portsmouth.

Dr. E. G. Hutchinson, licensed as a medical doctor as well as a dentist, pracitced here during the forties in a Baltimore Street office.

Dr. Wm. H. Gray, a native of Robersonville, located in Williamston in 1948, after practicing in Pink Hill six months. After serving in the U. S. Navy from 1951 until 1953, he returned to Williamston, practicing now in the Williamston Clinic at Martin General Hospital.

Opening an office in Robersonville in 1950, Dr. Edward K. Wright located in Williamston in 1953, practicing first in the Manning building, later in the old Martin General Hospital, and still later in the clinic adjoining the new hospital.

Dr. William E. Tripp, Jr., opened his office in Robersonville in August, 1969, and continues practice there in the same office formerly occupied by Dr. Kilpatrick.

Dr. David T. Marshburn, an Onslow County native, following his graduation at Chapel Hill and a service period spent in the U. S. Navy, built an office on Highway 17 and located there in June, 1969.

The last of the dentists to locate in Williamston is Dr. Edward D. Price who built an office a short distance south of Town and Country

Restaurant and began practice in 1972. He is a native of Martin County but attended high school in Bethel.

A Williamston native, Kenneth Manning, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Manning, earned a degree in orthodonics in Canada, and is now practicing in nearby Washington.

Stephen Jones Ward earned a degree in dentistry, and practiced in Florida until his death several years ago. The Ward family made medical history for this county. The two elder medical doctors, Jesse and Vernon A., Sr., came to Martin from Pitt. Dr. Ward had three sons, Walter Elliott and Joe, who earned degrees in medicine, and Dr. Stephen J., in dentistry. No other family in the county has contributed more members to the medical profession.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Ward, late of Williamston, Dr. Al Ward was graduated from the School of Dentistry, Chapel Hill, and located in Roanoke Rapids where he has practiced for 22 years. He is married to the former Ethel Taylor, daughter of Mrs. R. A. Taylor of Williamston and the late Mr. Taylor.

Believed to be the first orthodontist among Martin County men, James A. Leggett attended college at Cullowhee following his graduation from Williamston High School. He earned a degree in orthodontia at the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry and established himself for practice in Durham. He is the son of Mrs. James A. (Namoi Ray) Leggett, a Williamston native, now of Boston, and the late Mr. Leggett.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. James C. Cooke of Williamston, Dr. Richard Cooke earned a degree at the School of Dentistry, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, specializing in periodontology. Following his graduation he practiced in the Navy at San Diego and then located in Goldsboro. He is now teaching one day each week at the dental school in Chapel Hill.

While not a Martin County native, Dr. Billy Mercer, son of Dr. and Mrs. W. C. Mercer, late of Williamston, spent much of his early life in Williamston where he was graduated from high school. He earned his degree in dentistry from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and is now practicing in Farmville.

A son of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Wilson Manning, county natives, Leslie, Jr., earned a degree in optometry at Southern College of Optometry, Memphis, Tenn. on June 3, 1977. A grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Modlin of near Jamesville, and Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Dave Manning, late of Griffins Township, he plans to practice in New Orleans.

CHIROPRACTORS

At least five chiropractors have practiced in this county, but little or nothing can be learned about some of them.

Dr. T. Ryan Boyd maintained an office in the Tar Heel apartments in the 1920s.

Dr. Paul Batchelor came over from Greenville and maintained an office in the Dunning home where Wachovia Bank now stands. He was in Williamston only during a part of 1943.

In either 1948 or 1949 Dr. George Horner maintained an office over Leggett's Soda Shop. His stay in Williamston was short.

Dr. Paul Burgess practiced in the small office building next to Welch's auto parts on South Haughton Street in the late forties or early fifties.

After maintaining an office in his home on West Warren Street a number of years, Dr. Ben R. Tucker constructed a spacious building on Highway 17 near the Town and Country Restaurant. He came to Williamston on October 1, 1957, and continues to practice in his comparatively new offices.

Dr. A. R. Bell, an osteopath, maintained an office on Tuesdays and Fridays in the old Martin County Bank building, second floor, back in August, 1918.

OPTOMETRISTS

Williamston has had three optometrists as practitioners on record.

Dr. James Edens located in the town in January, 1947, and practiced in an office behind the Davis pharmacy until January, 1952.

In November, 1952, Dr. L. S. Christian opened an office on Baltimore Street and practiced there until he built a spacious and modern building on West Main Street in the 400 block.

Dr. Robert L. Hartsell came to Williamston in the late 1950's and continues practice in the offices next to the Welch auto parts store on South Haughton Street.

VETERINARIANS

Six or more veterinarians have practiced in Martin County during the past 55 years.

Little is remembered about the man, but Dr. E. N. Gordon was in Williamston in the late teens. Attorney Elbert S. Peel recalls the first Armistice celebration in the county, explaining that Dr. Gordon drove a steed in a horse race near the river in the old Whitley field on November 11, 1919.

Dr. John Fleming Thigpen, Sr., came to Williamston in 1921 following an internship at Mt. Sterling, Ky. He practiced in the county until 1943.

Dr. A. J. Osteen came to Williamston from Belhaven in 1933 and practiced in the county until 1946 when he moved to Georgia.

Dr. W. F. Coppage, a graduate from the veterinary school at Auburn University, came to Williamston on July 4, 1946, and maintained an office on North Haughton Street until he sold out in 1976 to Dr. Barry Welch.

Dr. A. R. Peele, also a graduate of Auburn, reported for practice in the county in July, 1952, and maintains an office on the Boulevard, near the old Post Road. Dr. Peele is believed to be the first Martin County man to have been graduated from a veterinary school. More recently a Williamston young man, Charles H. Manning, Jr., was graduated from the University of Georgia veterinary school and located in nearby Washington following a short practice in Miami.

CHAPETR XIV

COUNTY HOSPITALS

Martin County is known to have had five hospitals during the period shortly before the War Between the States to the present. There are only two operating in the county at the present time, including Martin General in Williamston and one in Robersonville, originally known as Wards' Clinic and then as Robersonville Township Hospital until it was purchased by the county in 1961.

The first mention of a hospital in the county was made a short time prior to the War Between the States. A Dr. Jones and his brother came over from Edgecombe, built a two-story hospital, an apothecary shop and a third structure for the care of the mentally ill. Very little is known about the operation, but the late Slade White recalled the little structure for housing the mentally ill. Mr. White, who with his family occupied the property for many years, said that he saw the rings in posts to which insane persons were chained. After practicing in the county and operating the hospital between Everetts and Spring Green, Dr. Jones sold the large farm and buildings either to Irving or Reuben Taylor. The doctor and his brother left the county before the war, but their destination has not been determined. The purchaser left the property to his two sons.

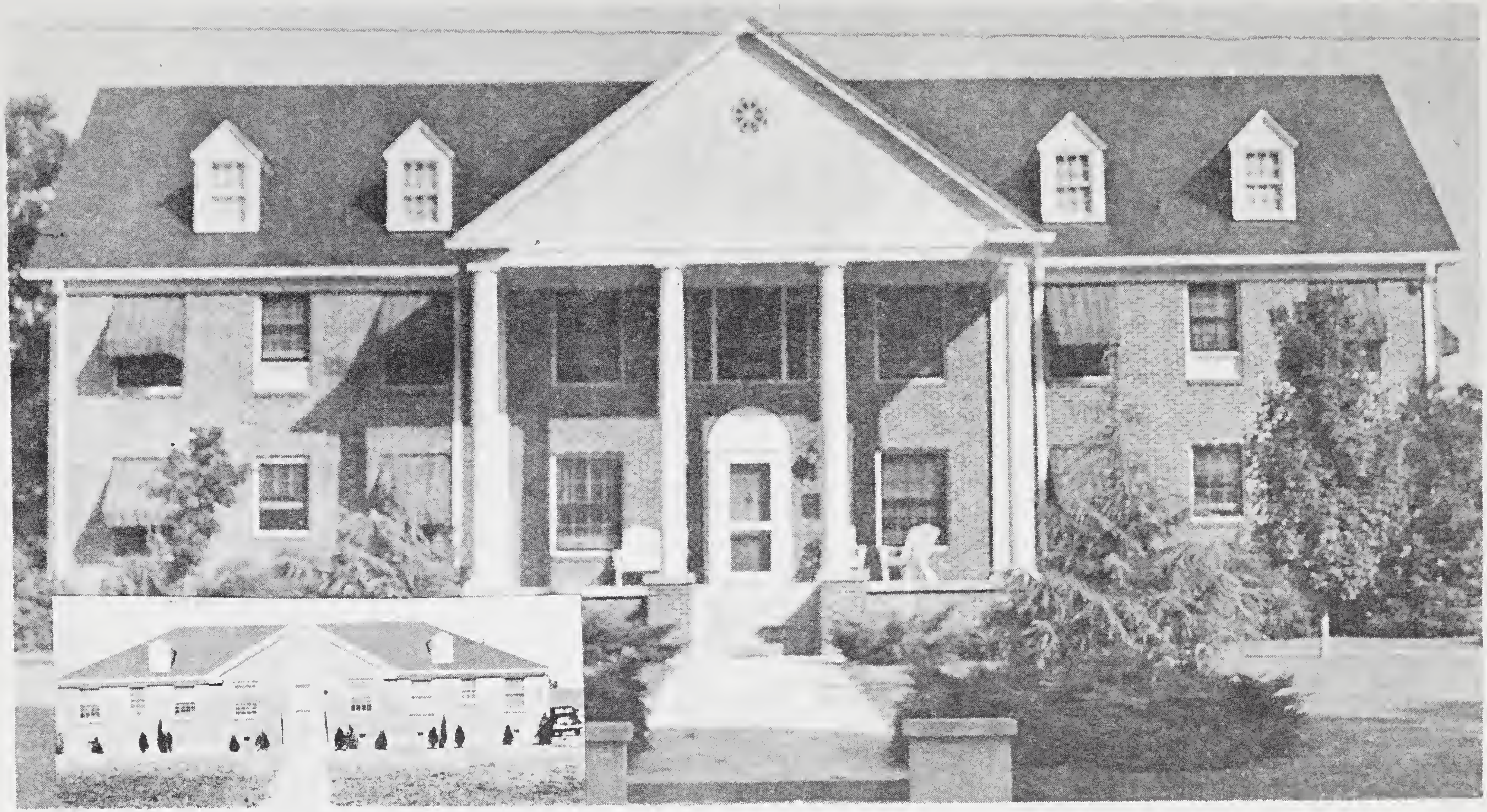
In August, 1905, Dr. William H. Harrell, Sr., proposed to build and operate a hospital in Williamston. The prominent physician died on November 26, that year, and the hospital plans never materialized.

In September, 1906, Dr. John D. Biggs offered a resolution, directing the newly appointed county representative in the State legislature, Augustus (Gus) Whitley to work for funds to care for the mentally ill.

It has been said that the late Dave Tayloe was considering closing his hospital in Washington and building one in this county. The proposed action, date unknown, never went beyond the discussion stage, Warren H. Biggs explained.

There was some agitaton for a hospital in this county back in November, 1922, when it was pointed out that there were fourteen Martin County people in the Washington hospital and a goodly number in Rocky Mount, Norfolk and Richmond hospitals at that time.

In a meeting on December 17, 1925, Dr. William E. Warren, county health officer, proposed a new county home for the aged and a hospital



First modern hospital in Martin County—Brown's Community Hospital was first housed in the one-story structure (inset) in 1939. Ten rooms were added in 1942 and the second story was constructed in August, 1943.

to the county health board. It was explained that the county had only three or four wooden shacks on the old Greenville or Prison Camp road to care for its aged. The property was valued at only $3,500. A new home for the aged was subsequently built, but no hospital was considered.

Coming to Williamston, on February 1, 1938, Dr. Victor E. Brown practiced as a member of a medical partnership for about one year before starting construction work on his community hospital on West Main Street. Constructed by F. W. Birmingham, the one-story hospital measured 34 by 78 feet. The ten-room facility was occupied in late July, 1939. Ten rooms were added to the structure in 1942, and a second story was added in August, 1943. Mrs. Chas. Edwards was the first patient. At the time of his death on January 15, 1960, Dr. Brown was making plans to build his second hospital on the Boulevard near the present primary school. Brown's Community Hospital was closed at that time.

Plans were being developed for the construction of a 40-bed hospital facility on West Liberty Street on February 1, 1949. Construction work was started on November 8, that year. The hospital, owned and manned by Drs. James Slade Rhodes, Jr., J. T. Llewellyn, Chas. I. Harris and G. G. Himmelwright, received its first patients on August 22, 1950.

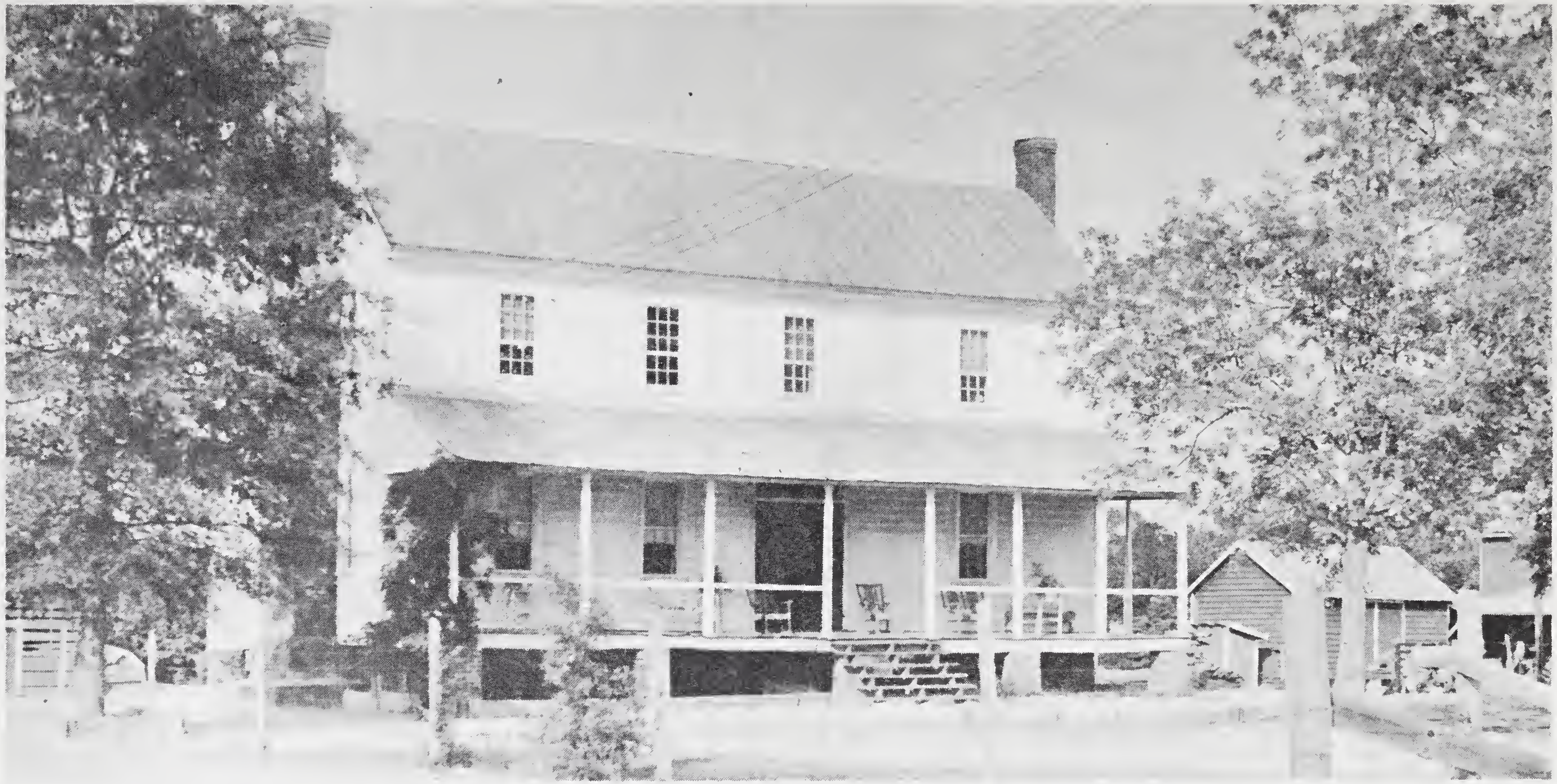
Dr. William H. Gray, Jr., had his dental offices in the new facility. Dr. Edward K. Wright, after practicing in the Manning building on Main Street a few years, opened dental offices in Martin General Hospital.

Dr. James H. McCallum, a recognized pediatrician, joined the Martin General staff in 1962, and practiced there until he built a children's clinic between McCaskey Road and the Boulevard, near the new Martin General Hospital.

After practicing a number of years in offices over the Robersonville theatre, Drs. Vernon and Jesse Ward built a clinic and small hospital in 1956 on Highway 903 in Robersonville. The operation was later known as Robersonville Township Hospital, a name it still bears after being sold to the county.

A movement for large hospital facilities in the county was started in April, 1959. A committee, composed of Elbert S. Peel, Jr., chairman; Ghurman Ange, Paul D. Roberson, John W. Lilley and Don Matthews, Sr., was appointed on May 4, that year, to study the proposed enlargement program.

Following many meetings and discussions the committee in September, 1961, recommended the county purchase the Martin General



FIRST HOSPITAL IN COUNTY.—A few years prior to the War Between the States a Dr. Jones came to Martin from Edgecombe and built the above home, later using it as a hospital. Dr. Jones apparently operated the hospital a comparatively short period. He also built an apothecary shop and a house for the care of the mentally ill in the yard. Located on the road from Everetts to Spring Green, the home is still standing.

Hospital for $330,000 and the facility at Robersonville for $70,000, the voters approving the recommendation by a vote of 1,468 to 496 in an election held in November, 1961. The action cleared the way for the construction of a three-story structure on McCaskey Road, Williamston.

On June 13, 1968, the voters favored the $3,300,000 proposal 3,091 to 502, providing a 10-cent property tax.

Dedicated in special ceremonies held on Sunday, December 3, 1972, the new hospital received its first patients on December 31, that year.

On February 22, 1972, the hospital board proposed the construction of offices for ten doctors, the facility to be occupied by the early part of 1974.

During those days when there were no local hospitals the doctors maintained offices mainly in drug stores. Minor operations were performed in the old S. R. Biggs Drug Store offices, and major surgical cases were transferred to hospitals in various locations.

Dr. J. B. H. Knight maintained a small office where the Manning building now stands. Dr. Jos. H. Saunders had an office now occupied by Martin County Economic Commission, next to the post office. He later built an office on South Smithwick Street, now occupied by Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company.

In connection with Martin General Hospital several have been employed more than a quarter century, including Caroline Stalls, Thelma W. Manning and Evelyn Daniels, nurses, Dan Sharpe, administrator, and Linwood Pate, maintenance engineer. They continue on the employment rolls.

Among the first, if not the first, a medical society was formed for the county in Williamston on April 26, 1904. Present at the organizational meeting were: Drs. R. H. Hargrove and Robert J. Nelson, Robersonville; Dr. B. L. Long, Hamilton; Drs. W. H. Harrell, William E. Warren and J. B. H. Knight, Williamston. Dr. Hargrove was named president. Dr. D. T. Tayloe of Washington assisted in the organization of the society.

CHAPTER XV

COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The first step toward a public health service in Martin County was taken on March 1, 1880, when the county commissioners, in accordance with a resolution adopted by the health board, named Dr. Alonza Hassell, Sr., county superintendent of health. Apparently there was a county health board, but little or nothing can be learned about it. Son of Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell, the doctor practiced medicine in Williamston, believedly in the small building now occupied by the Martin County Development Commission. The salary was $10 a month, and no expenses were mentioned.

Dr. Hassell served until his death or about 1889 when he was succeeded by Dr. William H. Harrell who continued in the position until his death in November, 1905.

Dr. William E. Warren was immediately appointed to the position, serving until 1931 at a salary of $25 a month. In addition to his regular duties, the health officer rendered medical services to the county home and jail inmates. The health board was composed of the county medical doctors. Drs. J. E. Smithwick of Jamesville and B. L. Long of Hamilton named Dr. Warren to the position.

On April 9, 1931,Dr. Jos. Hubbard Saunders was named to fill the position made vacant by Dr. Warren's death. He served in the position until about the time of his death on August 3, 1939. The salary was $30 a month.

Recognizing the need for expanded public health services, citizens from all parts of the county requested and petitioned the board of commissioners to consider employing a full-time health officer in April, 1929. The great depression was experienced about that time, and little was said about a full-time health officer until April, 1935.

Dr. Fox of the State Board of Health, was called in for consultations. Dr. Saunders, serving as health officer at that time, stated that it was his belief that a full-time department would accomplish much for the people of the entire county. The board of health, composed of John E. Pope, chairman; James Manning, secretary; John L. Hassell and Drs. W. C. Mercer, V. A. Ward and James S. Rhodes, Sr., endorsed the department. The county commissioners approved the plan in May, 1937, and arrangements were made immediately to place the department on a full-time basis.

Dr. E. W. Furgurson, now a practicing physician in Plymouth, accepted the full-time position, and entered upon his duties February 1, 1938. He reported on February 18, that he had employed his staff, including Misses Mary Stokes Roberson of Wilmington and Christine High of Durham, nurses; Charles Leonard, sanitarian, and Miss Beth Long, secretary.

Eleven months later Dr. Furgurson resigned the position and entered private practice in Plymouth, having well established the department. During the early part of his service and in his first activity report, Dr. Furgurson explained that a T.B. clinic had been held, and that 2,000 children were given dental examinations.

Dr. Furgurson was succeeded by Dr. F. E. Wilson who resigned, effective January 1, 1940, after serving from March 10, the previous year. Dr. Wilson was named to head the Edgecombe-Greene District Health Department.

Dr. John W. Williams, a native of Beaufort County and former practitioner in Everetts for about ten years, succeeded Dr. Wilson in 1940 and served until his death in May, 1953.

It was during the term of Dr. Williams that the department was moved to a new health center, corner of Harrell and Beech streets. When the department became full time, the public health activities were centered in the old city hall offices. The new center had been discussed as far back as February, 1950, and a contract for its construction was approved the middle of January, 1951. The property was occupied on December 11, 1951. Costing $58,000, the center was inspected by representatives of the Medical Care Commission and John Henry Edwards, chairman of the Martin County Board of Commissioners, and J. Sam Getsinger, board clerk. The county paid $20,000, the Medical Care Commission paying the remainder.

Also during Dr. Williams's term the handling of vital statistics was moved from individuals over the county to the health department. The change was approved by the county commissioners in early June, 1944.

The next county health officer was Dr. Sam A. Graham who entered upon his duties in June, 1954, and served until October, 1957, when he located in Portsmouth, Va., to head the health department there.

Martin County was unable to obtain a full-time health officer in 1958 and Edgecombe shared the services of Dr. W. A. Browne who worked in the neighboring county three days and in Martin two days each week. The arrangement was continued until March, 1961. Dr. Grover Godwin, a Williamston native, was made head of the department in September, that year. He served until July, 1965.

In October, 1965, Dr. K. L. VanHorn was made head of the department, serving until November, 1969, when he located in Washington to serve as Beaufort County health officer. He was succeeded in January, 1970, by Dr. Martel Dailey who served part time in the position until October, that year.

Dr. James S. Rhodes, Jr., served as the department's medical adviser from October, 1970, until July 12, 1971, when H. B. Glover was made director. He continues in that position.

In November, 1973, the department was moved to the old Martin General Hospital building on Liberty Street from the property, corner of Harrell and Beech streets. Martin County Community Action occupied the old health department building a short time later.

The department in this county was merged in January, 1974, with the departments in Tyrrell and Washington counties. There are fifteen members on the district health board, including eight from Martin, five from Washington and two from Tyrrell. Mr. Glover directs the 60-member district staff, including 25 in Martin.

The district Tideland Mental Health programs, directed by Mrs. Willie Rogers of Williamston, shares the old hospital building with the board of health. The mental health district includes Martin, Beaufort, Washington, Tyrrell and Hyde counties, and operates independently of the health department.

HEALTH REVIEW

Based on old records and Elder C. B. Hassell's diary, a brief review of health conditions is included in this volume along with disease control actions taken over the years.

Scarlet fever and "black" measles raged in the area back in May, 1858, claiming at least eleven lives.

A smallpox epidemic struck the county in May, 1862, and a quarantine was established for all of District No. 3, possibly in the Hamilton section. A limited smallpox epidemic was reported by Dr. B. L. Long in the Hamilton area in early February, 1914, the doctor explaining he had treated fifteen patients successfully and vaccinated 300 or more people. The disease was prevalent over the county. About three years later in January, 1917, Dr. W. E. Warren, superintendent of public health, reported smallpox cases along with whooping cough, diptheria and measles. He invoked state health laws, calling for the immunization of all school children and those who came in contact with the diseases. Another smallpox epidemic threatened the county in January, 1928, when eleven cases were reported, including six in Hamilton, three in Williamston and two in Robersonville.

Charles Daughtry, a clerk for W. H. Carstarphen, died on September 2, 1866, of what was believed to have been typhus fever.

One of the first moves for better health in the county was reported on July 4, 1910, when J. Paul Simpson, Sr., contracted to put water works in the county jail for $325.

The first organized drive against the common hookworm was launched in the county in 1911. A dispensary was maintained in the courthouse, and handled a land-office business. A second dispensary was operated and the worm was just about eliminated in March, 1912.

In compliance with state law, Martin County started recording births and deaths in August, 1913. The following registrars were named to handle the records: Dr. Jesse Ward, Robersonville; N. M. Worsley, Goose Nest; Mrs. B. L. Long, Hamilton; M. P. Taylor, Poplar Point; Dr. Wm. E. Warren, Williamston; Staton Ayers, Cross Roads; M. D. Mobley, Bear Grass; J. A. Daniel, Griffins; J. A. Getsinger, Jamesville, and J. W. Hopkins, Williams. In June, 1944, vital statistics were placed in the hands of the health department.

The first concerted drive against typhoid fever was started in July, 1913. The peak of the drive was reached in the summer of 1933 when 12,500 persons were immunized. During the summer of 1930 approximately 5,000 persons took the "shots".

Still on the health trail, the county commissioners directed Register of Deeds S. S. Brown on November 6, 1916, to employ a janitor for the courthouse, the salary not to exceed $5 per month.

County health suffered a mighty blow when "Spanish" influenza struck in October, 1918. Schools, churches, picture shows were closed and all public gatherings were prohibited by the health board. Stores were closed and the streets were deserted. Druggists slept on cots near the drug counter, filling prescriptions day and night. The peak of the epidemic was reached that year in November. Soup kitchens were maintained, and a few daring souls ventured into the countryside to feed those who could not help themselves. It was reported that a young girl died of the influenza and her body was not moved in three days. The parents were lying at the point of death and could not act or even call for help. Death was striking twice a day in a single block, and the funeral coach made one trip after another for days. It was estimated that there were 100 deaths or more in the county during the epidemic.

Milder "flu" epidemics were experienced in 1919 and 1920. In the latter year schools were closed along with public gatherings except churches. The ban was lifted on March 2, 1920.

A countywide dental program was launched in early 1923, and Dr. E. J. Griffin spent eight weeks in the county handling the examinations.

Then in May, 1923, all school children under the age of thirteen years were examined, and 123 had their tonsils removed. A second tonsil-adenoid clinic was held in the spring of 1929, when all the children in the county's 57 schools were examined.

The next health-related drive in the county was against malaria. More than 550 houses were sprayed in 1945 and 2,115 the following year.

A major move health wise was made about the middle of January, 1951, when the American Red Cross Tidewater Regional Blood Center, Norfolk, included Martin in its program. Dr. Chas. I. Harris made several trips to the center, making arrangements to have the program inaugurated. Working with him were V. J. Spivey and Wheeler Manning, chairman and co-chairman of recruiting. Mrs. Garland Woolard served as chairman of volunteer services. County citizens, including National guardsmen, donated 186 pints of blood during the first visit.

With smallpox and typhoid fever eliminated, the health department started a drive against tuberculosis the latter part of January, 1948. Nearly 13,000 people, their ages ranging between 16 and 70 years, had their chests X-rayed at the four units located in Jamesville, Williamston, Robersonville and Hamilton. About 125 persons were instructed to undergo further examinations. The program was maintained seven or eight years, and the county TB sanatorium was closed on February 24, 1955, after serving the disease victims for 13 years. The lone patient there at the closing was transferred to the Eastern Carolina T.B. Sanatorium, Wilson.

Housed in dilapidated shacks, said by some not to be fit for a dog to live in, twelve inmates of the Martin County Home for the Aged and Infirm were moved from the old individual units on the old Greenville or Prison Camp road to the new $40,000 brick structure on Highways 13 and 64, West, on May 6 and 7, 1927, by Keeper John Bland. In continuous operation since that time, the 50-year-old structure has been well kept.

To combat rabies, the county provided a full-time dog warden service in 1956-1957. The warden, Paul Williams, handled 4,155 dog vaccinations and has held the stray dog population to a comparatively low figure.

On October 5, 1971, the authorities made plans for a county-wide landfill to handle garbage and trash. Located on the old Sitterson farm now owned by J. E. Corey on McCaskey Road, the project involved a cost of approximately $110,000.

Random Health Reports

The health notes below were gleaned from the Elder C. B. Hassell diary, and date back to 1838.

The years of 1838, 1839 and 1840 have been considered healthy in Williamston and vicinity. People were sickly for several years prior to that time, the diary reads.

Hassell said on June 15, 1849: "It was becoming quite sickly in Williamston and vicinity. The bowel complaint chiefly prevailed. While the great cities of the Union had the Asiastic cholera in them to a very considerable extent, the villages and country places were visited with dysentery, which also frequently proved fatal."

Explaining that the epidemic had not abated in Williamston and vicinity, the diary said on March 26, 1850 that there had been numerous deaths from dysentery and other diseases.

The following entry appears in the diary on June 5, 1850: "The report of a case of smallpox has been confirmed. William Hoell, son of Alsala (?) Hoell, is said to have gone to New York and returned by sea. It is supposed he contracted the disease while in New York. The village has been thrown into great excitement. Several families have left and more will leave, perhaps in a day or two. Business is at a standstill. The school in the academy has come to a close two months sooner than planned, and the teacher, Mr. Matthews, his wife and son expect to leave this week for their home in Maine. The sick man, Hoell, has been carried about one and one-half miles from town to a school house near Samuel L. Whitley's where he is to be attended to by a nurse, and no one else but the physicians is to visit him."

On February 12, 1852, Hassell said that pneumonia, rheumatism, sore throats and the like were prevailing in this county, that a number of persons died.

A diary entry on August 16, 1855, reads: "It was reported in town this day that a steamer had passed the landing from Norfolk, leaving some old bedding, etc. on the wharf and that she had two cases of yellow fever on board. Upon which the commissioners held a meeting and passed an ordinance fining any captain of a vessel $500, who should arrive at or pass the wharf from Norfolk without a permit from the health officers of Elizabeth City and Plymouth."

Hassell reported the following on August 22, 1855: "Two cases of yellow fever at Plymouth quarantine, one dead and the other thought not likely to survive. Very bad yet in Norfolk, Portsmouth and Gosport. The fever has been there since July 16. A great many persons had died and ten thousand, it was supposed, had left the places."

On August 24, 1855, the diary entry read that a report in circulation this day that a man was seen floating down Roanoke River, and for fear that he had died with yellow fever on board some boat and had been thrown overboard, the coroner would not have him taken up.

Williamston's town commissioners passed a health ordinance on May 17, 1862, Hassell stating that he attended a meeting of the officials when the law was passed, ruling against persons coming to town from that section of the county within District No. 3 because the area was infected with smallpox.

Hassell said in a February 9, 1863, entry that he had had sons, Walter, Alonzo, 7, Sylvester, daughters, Cordelia and Mary, himself, and Negroes, John, Rosetta, Ann, Fanny and Harriet, vaccinated, presumably against smallpox.

No previous mention of vaccinations was found, and it could have been that the immunizations were among the first, if not the first, in the county.

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